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September/October 2002
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"He was ill a long time. But it was not the horrors of prison life, not the hard labour, the bad food, the shaven head, or the patched clothes that crushed him. What did he care for all those trials and hardships . . . it was not his shaven head and his fetters he was ashamed of: his pride had been stung to the quick. It was wounded pride that made him ill."

—*Fyodor Dostoevsky*
Crime and Punishment

COVER

Deep within the Underdark of Faerûn lies Manzessine Prison, home to some of the creatures even mind flayers find abhorrent enough to put away. What atrocity is horrid enough to warrant one mind flayer imprisoning another? Ask Absterthelid, illustrated menacingly by Wayne Reynolds, an escaped prisoner hoping to find freedom in "Spiral of Manzessine."

HATED, ONCE MORE!

Once upon a time, there was an editor. Some readers hated him because he ran negative reviews of their favorite games and others hated him because he was too easy on games they didn't like. Some game publishers hated him because they thought the reviews he printed were unfair. At one time or another, nearly every publisher in the computer game business thought the editor, who became an editor-in-chief, was out to get them. Ironically, there were times that some readers thought the editor was in league with the very publishers that thought he was out to get them.

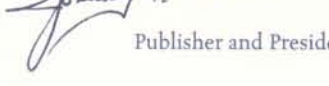
Instead of being depressed about being hated, the editor felt vindicated. He believed that if he was getting shot at by both sides, he must be fairly objective in the way he was handling the editorial content.

Today, that former editor-in-chief of Computer Gaming World is expecting to be hated once again. Now a publisher—indeed, the president of a new publishing company—I am announcing that I have to raise the price of *Dungeon Magazine* from $5.99 to $7.99. I really hate to do this because I hate to prove that certain digital nabobs of negativism were correct when they predicted that adding *Polyhedron* to *Dungeon* would lead to a price increase. I know I'll be hated, even when I tell you that any new or old subscribers that place their orders before the end of the Gen Con Game Fair will be price-protected: The subscription price will not go up until after Gen Con and subscriptions will be honored at the old rates until Gen Con is over.

I know that I'll be hanged in effigy online for this, but I have to do it in order to insure that I can continue to publish *Dungeon/Polyhedron* at the present level of quality. I didn't raise the price without doing a little comparison shopping. The following list is a random sampling of roleplaying products I picked up around the office. I've listed the title, publisher, number of pages minus the cover pages, amount of internal color (black and white, spot color, or 4/color), and price per page of material delivered. At the bottom of the list, I compare *Dungeon/Polyhedron* as a whole after removing the average number of ads per issue over the last three issues and offer a price per page at the new price. I think you'll find that we're competitive. This list isn't compiled to denigrate another publisher or question the value of their products. It is, however, designed to underscore the value we are trying to include in *our* products.

Title	Publisher	# pages	internal color?	$ per page
Prophecies of the Dragon	Wizards of the Coast	191	4/c	$.16
Troll Lords: Galal's Grave	Fiend Games	24	b/w	$.25
Akrasia: Thief of Time	Eden Studios	32	b/w	$.28
Burning Shaolin	Atlas Games	32	spot	$.28
The Gryphon's Legacy	Gaslight Press	48	b/w	$.27
Interludes	Thunderhead Games	64	b/w	$.17
Dark Awakenings: Shadowland	Auran d20	56+CD	spot	$.36
Pit of Loch-Durnan	Mystic Eye Games	72	$.17	
Star Wars: Tempus Feud	Wizards of the Coast	128	b/w	$.19
Dungeon/Polyhedron	Paizo Publishing	150	4/c	$.05
D&D adventures only	Paizo Publishing	80+	4/c	$.09
D20 mini-game only	Paizo Publishing	50	4/c	$.16

Here's hoping that even if you hate me, you still recognize that *Dungeon/Polyhedron* is one of the most excellent values in gaming, no matter how you measure it! As the president of Paizo Publishing, I promise to keep it that way!



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LETTERS

Tell us what you think of this issue's adventures. Write to: Letters, *Dungeon Magazine*, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055 or send an email to dungeon@wizards.com.

ON TOKENS

As with most letters you must receive, mine starts with gushing praise. I absolutely love your magazine and devour ever issue feverishly. The old format was fine, but I do prefer the new one now that I know it delivers more words per page. It's all about content, baby! On the topic of content, I have never been disappointed in an issue. While not all adventures are to my taste, and few fit into my campaign, they are always a delight to read, and each issue gives me something new I can spring on my players.

The reason for my writing is that I'd like to add my voice to the "great token debate." First, I'm a big fan of the tokens. Please keep them coming. In fact, I would love to get two pages of tokens, even if only occasionally. I wouldn't mind paying slightly more per issue for this feature.

Some have written in with suggestions for creating tokens on the computer or using color copiers. This is great advice, but it only works for those of us who can spare the time. My life is different than it was when I first started playing RPG's (Dungeons & Dragons Basic Set—I still have the box). Time is at a premium, now. I appreciate having tokens hand delivered to my mailbox. I also like them in full color, glossy, on quality card stock. I'm certain that Wizards of the Coast can produce them cheaper that I can do it myself. Besides, I'd rather be designing or DMing my campaign!

Please do not label the monster names anywhere on the front or back of the tokens themselves. I would prefer my players not be given the names of the creatures they encounter. Figuring that information out for themselves is part of the fun, especially for the novices (and I have a couple in my gaming group). Granted, experienced players probably recognize the pictures straight away, but labels still detract from the realism. In my game world, monsters do not appear with name tags.

I also like duplicate tokens, where the monster type justifies them. This is one area where tokens are superior to miniatures. I don't have enough orc miniatures to create a respectable horde, and probably never will. I prefer variety in my collection. The last time I went to the hobby store for orcs, I came home with a wraith, a bugbear champion, and a drow priestess complete with two giant spider pets. My money spent, I never did get more orcs.

Lastly, I am all in favor of specialty tokens, such as light sources, mounts, tables, chairs, treasure chests, and so on. Hats off to Mr. Adkison (Dungeon #90) for his worthwhile suggestion. Preferably, this would be on that bonus page I mentioned earlier (hint, hint).

One final comment: I know you've gotten some flak over the tabloid-style tag-lines. For what it's worth, I think they are hilarious!

My thanks go out to your staff and writers for preparing such a fine publication. Keep up the great

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work! If anyone's looking for me, I will be staked out in front of my mailbox, waiting for DUNGEON #93.

Tim Forner
Vancouver, BC
Canada

We're looking into variants on the monster tokens all the time, as evidenced by issue #92's SPELLJAMMER ships. Two monster tokens might be out of our budget range, though. Finally, we're always interested in doing other premiums. If there's something you'd like to see other than monster chits, drop us a line and let us know!

LET ME SUM UP

The arrival of DUNGEON #93 to my home is timely. The first adventure in the magazine, "Vanity," is surprisingly well-suited for my playing group. We have a current GREYHAWK campaign (modified from the "official" material), where the player characters are situated in Geoff and dealing with numerous humanoids. They are also 5th-level. I plan on fitting this adventure into the campaign as soon as possible, with some modifications, of course. Well done, DUNGEON crew and Mr. Schell.

The artwork by Ron Spencer is excellent. I particularly like his chimera rendition. The only complaint I have is that I wish the pictures were larger and showed more of the creatures! The cartography by Craig Zipse is quite nice. His style in fascinating. The Proud Prow Mountain map is the type I favor for wilderness maps. The elevated look is cool, not to mention helpful to me as a DM.

The "Statue Gallery" is not to my tastes, but there is something very useful in the adventure. This goes to show how part of an adventure, no matter how "small," can be utilized. The concept of the petrified statues, before and after, is intriguing to say the least. It is something I will consider for future adventures in my campaign.

"Swamp Stomp" is a cunningly sneaky adventure. I like it! The NPC motivations are solid and require some dwelling on. Mr. Ward has an interactive adventure here, one that I would like to fit into the campaign at a later point. The picture on page 57 is striking!

The "Critical Threat" this issue is not all that useful to me, but I am so impressed with the picture and map of the threat that I am determined to find some way of working it into the campaign. I am. No, really. The idea of the other creatures and why they are there is one worth exploiting.

I am not saying much about the content of "The Storm Lord's Keep," because it is such a high-level adventure, an area where I have little current experience in this version of D&D. The artwork and cartography are good, as always. The plot seems a bit off, but that's probably me rather than an indication of the quality of the adventure. My first impression is that I think this adventure would have been better of with changing the alignments of the primary "villains." The roleplaying possibilities are numerous, and the possible encounters in the adventure can still be viable.

Another fine issue. Thanks to everyone involved.

Darkkewulf
Via Email

RICH FOR MY BLOOD

First, I want to say that I think you've done incredible things with DUNGEON over the last ten issues. Both the quality and the value of the magazine are outstanding. However, there is a trend that I need to object to: handing out powerful magic items as standard-issue equipment to rank-and-file monsters. The 3rd Edition magic item creation rules don't support it, and it's not in keeping with the spirit of the game.

The twelve sentry cloud giants in "The Storm Lord's Keep" are each identically equipped with 240,000 gp worth of magic items. Feel free to check my numbers, but that's about the same total value as the magic possessed by each of the generic 20th-level characters in the DUNGEON MASTER'S *Guide*. Should a single CR 19 monster have more magic wealth than a 20th-level

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character? No, especially when the monsters are meant to be no more than attrition encounters in the adventure. So, if nothing else, the magic items each sentry has are too powerful by a factor of two or three pluses.

Now where could all of this magic have reasonably come from? I notice that none of the spellcasters in the keep have item creation feats, so they're not home-grown. Could the cloud giants be paying someone else to produce this equipment? It doesn't appear so, as each sentry's equipment is worth more than *all* of the non-magical treasure to be found in the adventure. Actually, this is another reason why the cloud giants couldn't produce the equipment themselves, as making magic items isn't free. The giants simply can't afford the magic items in the adventure. This could be solved by dramatically increasing the amount of treasure in the adventure, or much more easily by again dropping more pluses from the sentries' equipment. Or could it be that the keep has been around forever and all of this stuff is their adventuring loot? No. In that case it wouldn't all be identical, and there would be tons of other treasure around, including many non-giant-sized weapons.

Even if the giants *did* have the resources and the item creation feats to manufacture all of their equipment, do you think there is a spellcaster out there who would devote a solid eight months of his valuable time, and almost 10,000 experience points, to cranking out the equipment necessary for *each* cloud giant sentry? No way; never. From this angle, all of their magic should be dropped, and they should just be given adamantine weapons and armor (and an extraordinary smith)—they are just sentries, after all, and what spellcaster is going to give up his power to outfit them? I think this is the best answer to the problem.

I understand that it would take space to detail different magic items for each high-level encounter, but I think that's the price to pay to be true to the game. Imagine conquering a CR 22 monster and sorting through its trove, to be told, "OK, you find three *staffs of power*." Can you see the jaws dropping? The allure of magic items is one of the strongest draws of the game, and by handing out powerful magic like cans of soda, you're destroying this allure. You can't equip a group of CR 19 monsters the same way you would equip a group of orcs, not if you want "epic" to mean anything.

Aaron Salancy
Via Email

240,000 gp is pretty accurate; that exceeds the DUNGEON MASTER's Guide *guidelines for an average 19th-level NPC by about 70,000 gp. You just need to remember that the guidelines for NPC gear are for NPCs of average wealth. The sentries and guards of the Storm Lord serve a much more powerful character—a powerful king of the storm giants—and therefore have access to wealth capable of garbing them in above average gear. As for who would make the equipment, I suppose you could ask the same question of the equipment carried by any NPC, especially at high levels. Heck, the villains should be asking the same question of the PCs! If we provided the background information behind how every NPC came by every piece of his gear, we wouldn't have room to print the actual adventures. Finally, realize that nearly all the sentries' equipment in the adventure is, at best, equal to that which should be carried by 21st-level characters, making it useful only for the cash it could bring the PCs. But finding a buyer . . . that sounds like another adventure altogether.*

ADAPTABLE

I have been playing D&D for twelve years now, and I have usually used the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting. I have used the adventures in *DUNGEON Magazine* and easily inserted them into my campaign; even the "Anvil of Time" (issue #86) was not that difficult.

I really appreciated the SPELLJAMMER material (issue #92) as it gave me a perfect place to move my high-level group in preparation for them to go on to epic levels. Freeing Moradin's Forge will be an epic adventure indeed.

Usually, the adventures in DUNGEON give my players and myself hours of fun, with only minor tweaks here and there. I was disappointed with Mr. Wyatt's "The Storm Lord's Keep" (issue #93). The reason is that even the low-level group I DM could have its cleric cast *discern lies* or *zone of truth*, so Elina would probably take a spanking from the group's female monk after the cleric told the group, "She is not telling us all." Other than that, it is a great adventure.

Keep up the good work! I really enjoy the time spent using your adventures, as well as the "Critical Threats."

Don Sullivan
Avon Park, FL

It might be true that a group of adventurers figure out that Elina the bard is hiding some material from them, as the adventure points out. That's unlikely to make the adventure less fun, though. It's also been our experience that groups don't tend to assume "helpful" NPCs always have ulterior motives, preferring to give them the benefit of the doubt.

BLANKET POLYHEDRON COMPLAINT LETTER

I would like to make a few comments on the recent conversion of [*Game Setting*] to the so-called "Third Edition" D&D.

BRING MORE TO THE TABLE

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ART BY **CLAUDIO POZAS**

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I have been a player of [*Game Setting*] since its creation and was disappointed with how it was presented. You have seemed somehow incapable of fitting hundreds of pages of material into forty. Your "new" [*Game Setting*] is basic, derivative, full of faddish "new ideas," and ignores so much of the history and flavor that made [*Game Setting*] such a hit in the years before it was canceled.

Rules have been needlessly changed to fit the so-called "new" "simplified" "Third Edition," and the setting itself has changed so much that [*Game Setting*] veterans like myself can barely recognize it as being based on an old game. How will new players cope?

I've had to personally convert all my old [*Game Setting*] products to our group's "Third Edition" (with all the necessary fixes—which I'm not making "open game content" so you can steal my ideas, you weasels), and have had to introduce a *fourth* mirror dimension just to take account of the official, broken rules from POLYHEDRON.

You should have more responsibility than to enter something this atrocious into [*Game Setting*] canon, as if we could just ignore it if we didn't like it. This feeble copy of the original, obviously published in a vain attempt to fulfill Wo$C's clear moral obligation to bring back [*Game Setting*], is not even worth the five bucks I paid for it. At that price you'd think you'd at least include some adventures, industry news, and comics. But that's what you get from people who run a games company like a business, without the deep love we true gamers have for the art.

In conclusion, until Wizard$ re-introduces [*Game Setting*], THAC0, and publish that cross-over with *Tunnels and Trolls* (1st edition, mind) we've all been waiting for, I shall be forced to boycott your company and start pestering Steve Jackson to bring back The Fantasy Trip.

In disgust,
Greg Gerrand
Via Email

Thanks for writing, [consumer]*! Your letter is simply one of many well-considered missives we've received since publishing* [Game Setting] (POLYHEDRON [month, issue number]).

While we intend all of our Mini-Games to appeal to the widest varieties of gamer, we find that the best way to bilk people out of their money is to return to old, outdated, unpopular games or campaign settings (see Omega World, POLYHEDRON p. 12). *The best part is that we don't even have to pay attention to continuity, which we think is for nerds. So,* [consumer]*, thanks again for the feedback! Hopefully, this letter will ignite an Internet controversy and sell a bunch of copies of this issue.*

In Mammon's name,
Erik Mona, POLYHEDRON Editor

BLOODLINES

BLOODLINES

BY LUKE JOHNSON

ARTWORK BY JASON A. ENGLE · CARTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT LEE

Magic Items · Monsters · NPCs · Objects · Settlements · Traps

"Bloodlines" is a D&D adventure designed for four PCs of 7th level. The characters can be of any race or class, but a cleric with the ability to channel positive energy will be quite helpful. Although designed for 7th-level characters, it is a simple matter to adapt the module to challenge characters of higher or lower levels. See the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar for some ideas about how to do this. "Bloodlines" can be easily integrated into any campaign.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Count Noliss von Denn is a greedy, scheming, oily, power-hungry aristocrat. He is the lord of a relatively minor noble house in whatever kingdom you decide to stage this adventure, and for years has been using underhanded techniques, shady dealings, betrayals, and blackmail to increase the power and resources of his house. He has been steadily climbing the ranks of power and has gained a reputation for infamy and dishonesty. In addition, he has been secretly studying arcane magic, planning to use these arts to further increase his pull.

Recently, Count Noliss discovered the existence of a ruin in an old-growth forest not far from his home in the fair-sized city of Etrial. Further investigation turned up a few moldy records pertaining to this ancient keep. Apparently, it was built a couple hundred years ago by ancestors of Count Noliss, and then sold fifty years later to the church of Obad-Hai. The church granted this acquisition to a peaceful order of monks devoted to the worship of Immshin, the Master of Winds (see the "Immshin, Master of Winds" sidebar). The monks converted the keep into a monastery and lived there for about a hundred years; fifty years ago, the structure was abandoned by the monks and fell into obscurity and disrepair. It has been standing vacant ever since.

Thinking to convert the building into a summer retreat for himself, Noliss bought his ancestral keep back from the church and hired a team of dwarven stonemasons to renovate it and conduct the needed repairs. He then went back to practicing sorcery and scheming against the other noble houses of the kingdom; the dwarves went to work.

Several weeks into the project, a messenger arrived at the count's manor with startling news. One of the dwarven craftsmen had discovered a hollow wall within the basement of the ruin, a fact not noted in the monastery records. Whatever was beyond the wall probably dated from when the structure was in von Denn hands originally! The head mason ordered his men to knock down the wall, revealing a hallway stretching off into the darkness—apparently more of the keep's basement—covered with dust and radiating a sense of extreme age. The walls were covered with paintings of a yellow star on a black eagle wing—the symbol of the Royal House of Jorat (the house of the current king of the realm).

Count Noliss knew at once what this meant. If this area of the keep did indeed date back to the original von Denn inhabitants, then depictions of the royal family's sigil could indicate a relationship between Houses von Denn and Jorat. Noliss has been striving to improve his house's standing for many years, but if it were discovered that House Jorat and House von Denn were related, he realized he could aim much, much higher. Images of a crown began to glimmer at the edges of his thoughts. He excitedly ordered his carriage made ready and set out himself to oversee the continuation of the excavations, and to offer a large reward to anyone who came up with proof that the two houses were indeed related.

But when Noliss and his entourage arrived, there remained no trace of the masons. The dwarves had completely disappeared, leaving only a few hammers and chisels lying rusted on the ground—and the wind howled strangely over the ancient walls of the keep.

Unwilling to risk his own skin, Count Noliss ordered one of his guards to enter the keep and see what fate had befallen the masons. The man didn't return for a long time, and the count and his party waited out the night for him. But come morning, there was still no sign of the guard. Angry and frightened, Noliss briefly considered putting his magical powers to the test by delving into the ruin himself, but he finally proved too much of a coward. Frustrated at this setback and at his own failings, frightened of the unseen menace that had apparently dispatched both his guard and the dwarven craftsmen, the count ordered his men to turn around and head back to the city.

On the way back, however, it became apparent that something from the keep was following them. Glimpsed vaguely through the trees, loping through the underbrush, it had such a smell of death about it that the horses shied and reared. One man was thrown from his saddle, and those who happened to glance back saw a dark shape from the trees leap upon the fallen rider, ripping into his throat with flashing teeth. Men and horses shrieked in terror and the entourage broke into full flight, the nobleman's carriage bouncing along the rough trail with painful bumps and jars. Finally, they managed to burst from the trees to behold a small band of travelers before them—the PCs . . . just the type of patsies the count needs.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

Count Noliss needs someone to delve into the ruins of his keep and discover if House Jorat and House von Denn are in fact related in some way. The PCs likely show suitable bravery and combat prowess in defeating the creature (a ghast) that was dogging the count's entourage, prompting Noliss to enlist the characters in his quest. Years of strained relations with other noble houses has taught the count not to trust anyone, however, and the PCs are even more suspect than most. Noliss keeps tabs on the party with his magic, and thus observes their trials and tribulations down in the keep. What he discovers in this way moves him to make the party's return less than hospitable.

Meanwhile, the PCs descend into the abandoned monastery and discover the evils that dwell below. They discover clues and snatches of tantalizing information that hint at the true doom that befell those who dwelled in the keep over 150 years ago. Along the way, they encounter tormented souls, corrupted by the malign influence that was accidentally unleashed in the ancient halls all those years in the past.

THE TRUTH

What actually happened at the keep? About 150 years ago, Severi von Dorenn, an ancestor of the current Count Noliss von Denn, was a respected and influential advisor to the king. He was also the royal court wizard and a member of the powerful von Dorenn family to boot. The von Dorenns were cousins of the royal family and thus were well favored by the king. They enjoyed a reputation across the land as being just, fair, and noble. Severi von Dorenn was thought to embody these concepts as much the rest of his aristocratic family.

But Severi was filled with a burning avarice. He yearned to take the throne for himself, and finally he decided that the only way to accomplish this end was to enlist the help of extraplanar forces. He began contacting the lower planes. The secrets he learned fueled his drive for power even further, and he consulted fiends, archdevils, and all manner of foul creatures before finally forming a plan that would place him on the throne.

If Severi was nothing else, he was patient. So it was that he bided his time for many years until finally the queen began to grow great with child—the king's first progeny. Severi then began to implement his scheme. Using foul magics to touch the unborn babe, Severi brushed at its immature mind ever so softly, subtly twisting the infant to his own ends. When it was old enough, this prince would be unswervingly loyal to Severi, and then it would be but a short time before the wizard himself wore the crown. The enchantments took hold, and all seemed to be going according to plan. But when the child was born, something was wrong: It had tiny horns and flashing red eyes.

The king and queen were devastated that their son was so malformed, believing it to be a natural defect or a curse from the gods. The common folk would never be able to ignore such a child. If it were known that a horned, fiendish-looking son was born to the king and queen, the peasants would certainly succumb to fear and rage, and perhaps turn against their monarch. Sadly, the king ordered that his new babe be secreted away for all time, never to show his face again. Severi volunteered to look after him.

For many years, Severi and a household of unassuming servants took care of the prince, living in an underground level of an old von Dorenn keep. Severi kept a close hold over the child, infusing him with even more dark energy, hoping to gain a powerful champion out of his soon-to-be servant.

But finally the wizard erred and went too far. The already unstable prince became truly mad when he reached young adulthood. One night he slunk from his bed, knife in hand, and brutally murdered the holy man of the keep, a young priest named Septimus. But this was only a precursor to the true atrocity. Several days later, brimming with insanity and incomprehensible evil, the prince slew every man and woman within the keep in a bloody scene of debauched butchery. Not even Severi was spared this fate, and afterward even the prince himself was consumed by the vile contamination infesting his being. Before his end, however, he followed instructions whispered by voices from beyond the plane and scrawled a rune onto the floor of his cell—a rune that would ensure that the taint of evil would remain forever in the echoing, underground corridors of the keep.

When the head of House von Dorenn discovered the bloody bodies below his keep, he grew almost mad with shame. Safeguarding the prince was the duty of his house, and he had failed mightily. In an effort to avoid embarrassment, he severed all ties with the throne, exchanged his title of Baron for the lesser Count, walled off the section of the basement where these evils had taken place, sold the keep to the Church of Obad-Hai, and finally, changed his family name to von Denn. All those with any knowledge of the travesty that took place in his cellars were sworn to secrecy, and the story of the prince and his keeper vanished into obscurity. But the fact remains that the von Dorenns, cousins to kings, are ancestors of Count Noliss von Denn.

The monks who came afterward used the keep for almost one hundred years as a monastery before they discovered the hollow wall within the basement. They knocked down this wall and began to use the area beyond just as they would any other part of the monastery, even creating a small shrine to Immshin down in the depths. But the monks who were rooming below began to disappear, and other monks as well, leaving nothing much behind except for occasional bloodstains. In terror, the remaining monks re-walled the area, believing (correctly) that they had despoiled some evil or sacred place. But it didn't help. Monks continued to vanish until the final few fled in terror, leaving the building a vacant haunt.

FOR THE PLAYERS

The central plot of this adventure revolves around Count Noliss's attempt to link his house with the royal House of Jorat, and from there launch his ambitious plan to land himself on the throne. An understanding of the intricacies of the political system isn't necessary; the players just need to understand that if they manage to find something that could connect von Denn's house to House Jorat, Count Noliss will be very happy.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

Though designed for a party of four 7th-level characters, "Bloodlines" can be easily adapted to provide a challenge for larger groups or for PCs of higher or lower level, simply by changing the strength and number of the foes. Use the following simple guidelines for ideas on how to accomplish this. Remember that changing the number and strength of the foes alters the experience points available and also changes the treasure-to-experience ratio.

4th- to 6th-level: Run the adventure as written, but with the following additional changes.

- Remove one ghast from area **3**, one mummy from area **5**, one shadow mastiff from area **8**, and one shadow from area **10a**.
- Make the fiendish mohrg in area **15** a fiendish wight instead, but use the rules for monster advancement (*Monster Manual* pp. 12–14) to adjust its Hit Dice total to be one or two higher than the average PC's level.
- Replace the osyluth and kyton in area **14** with a fiendish 5th-level and a fiendish 4th-level human fighter (see *Monster Manual* pp. 211–212). Assume that these were deceased knights given unholy life by the power of the rune.
- The sword *Sunrazor* is not flaming.
- Give the undead abbot in area **12** one or two fewer cleric levels. Keep his level on par with the average party level.
- Adjust Count Noliss's level to be two levels higher than the average party level (drop his wizard levels, not his aristocrat levels).

8th- to 10th-level: Run the adventure as written, but with the following additional changes.

- Add one ghast to area **3**, two mummies to area **5**, one shadow mastiff to area **8**, and one shadow to area **10a**.
- Use the rules for monster advancement (*Monster Manual* pp. 12-14) to add 1, 2, or 3 Hit Dice (depending on the party's average level) to the fiendish mohrg in area **15**.
- Replace the osyluth and kyton in area **14** with a barbazu and a hamatula (devils). The sword *Sunrazor* becomes a *+2 longsword bane vs. evil outsiders*. It retains its *searing light* ability.
- Make the undead abbot in area **12** a cleric one level higher than the average party level.
- Adjust Count Noliss's level to be two levels higher than the average party level (increase his wizard levels, not his aristocrat levels).

There are two avenues to get the PCs involved in this adventure. The first is that the PCs run into the count's retreating entourage (as described above in the "Adventure Synopsis" section) and kill the creature that was pursuing them (a ghast), impressing the count with their martial prowess and bravery. Another possibility is that one of the characters is actually related to House von Denn (through a second cousin's marriage, or something equally remote), and the count recognizes the PC and demands that he aid him as part of his familial duty. If this second method is used, the following encounter must be adjusted accordingly.

THE ATTACK (EL 3)

It is assumed that the characters are en route somewhere when this adventure begins, although they should be relatively free of other obligations and ready to embark upon a new quest. The following assumes that the PCs are traveling west along an old dirt road.

The track you've been following doesn't look like it gets much use these days. It has been hours since any other travelers have passed by, and the sun is beginning its downward curve toward evening. A tangled, forbidding forest stretches away on the right, full of shadows and undergrowth, but it hasn't done anything interesting since you came upon it 3 hours ago.

Suddenly the monotony of the landscape is shattered by shouts and cries from the trees, the sounds of galloping mounts and snapping twigs. Several surcoated riders burst from a small game trail, followed closely by a bouncing carriage pulled by two wild-eyed horses. One rider sees you, raises a hand and shouts a wordless greeting before men, horses, carriage, and all come charging in your direction, the carriage careening crazily over the uneven ground.

They all pull to a stop next to you, breathing hard. The riders seem too winded to talk aside from a few panted hellos, although they look happy to see you. Sweat shines on their faces. Their surcoats and the side of the carriage are emblazoned with a symbol showing a charging black boar, and after a few moments the carriage door swings open and a somewhat disheveled-looking nobleman emerges. He is of average height with a bit of a paunch, and he is dressed in a red velvet robe with gold trim and a wide, cloth-of-gold belt encircling his middle. He looks to be about forty, with slicked-back, salt-and-pepper hair, watery blue eyes, and fingers bearing the weight of several rich rings. A medallion hangs around his neck, featuring the same charging boar symbol that appears on his carriage and his men's livery.

This is Count Noliss von Denn, currently afraid for his life. His regal demeanor is somewhat diminished by his wide eyes and obvious fear. PCs who wish to identify the charging boar symbol can do so on a successful bardic knowledge or Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check (DC 10). If a PC succeeds at one of these checks, tell him that the charging black boar is the sigil of House von Denn, a somewhat minor noble house of the kingdom. Of course, the characters can also simply ask.

"Well met, good sirs," pants the nobleman. "I am Count Noliss von Denn, liege lord of these lands, and I am pleased to make your acquaintance." He glances nervously back at the trees. "Ah, if you would be so good as to—" The count stops short with a strangled cry, as a strange, humanlike creature tears from the trees, making a beeline for the group. The monster resembles a man comprised of nothing but skin, bones, and a few shreds of muscle, running low to the ground, sharp teeth flashing between parted lips. The count gulps and dives back into the relative safety of his carriage. His men glance at the rapidly closing creature with nervous eyes, then at you, then back at the creature.

Obviously the PCs are expected to help out here. The creature is a ghast and should pose minimal threat to a party of 7th-level characters. If the players are disinclined to offer aid, the count's four men (male human War1) attack the creature, all the while shouting for assistance. This short combat should be played out completely.

Creature: This ghast used to be a monk of Immshin, back when the keep was a monastery. Scraps of vestments can still be seen entwined about its emaciated limbs.

Ghast: hp 30; *Monster Manual* 97 (ghoul).

Count Noliss watches the battle from the window of his carriage and realizes that he could probably have destroyed the creature with relative ease. However, the PCs look like just the sort of brave, foolish adventurers he needs. After the ghast is defeated, he again steps from his carriage and speaks to the characters. Read or paraphrase the following at this time:

The count steps up and clears his throat to get your attention. "Impressive, most impressive. It's been too long since I've seen combat raised to that level." He smoothes his hands over his robes. "Perhaps we should continue where we left off. As I said, I am Count Noliss von Denn. And you are . . . ?"

After the PCs give him their names, continue with the following.

"The pleasure is mine. Listen, it just so happens that I have a little issue with which I need help, and after witnessing this," he glances at the dead ghast, "I'm convinced that you are the ones I need. You see, I recently purchased an old keep that belonged to my family a long time ago, although it is now completely abandoned. I have reason to believe that there is proof down in the basement of this keep that will serve to connect my House, House von Denn, with the Royal House of the king: House Jorat." He gives you a meaningful look. "The problem is, well, that." He looks again at the remnants of the creature. "I need a few courageous souls, such as yourselves, to venture into the basement of my empty keep and find something, anything, that speaks of a family tie between the von Denns and the Jorats. Are you interested, good sirs?"

If the PCs are interested in the count's offer, he willingly discusses details with them. He recounts what he knows of the keep's history (from keep to monastery to ruin, but none of the details surrounding the fiendish prince, since he is aware of none of this information), and tells them of the messenger that came and told him of the paintings on the walls. He speaks of the disappearance of the dwarven masons and the guard he sent to investigate (all of which can be found in the "Adventure Background" section).

What he wants is for the party to return with anything he can use to tie himself to the royal family, a maneuver that would improve his standing in the kingdom tenfold and possibly grant him an avenue to the throne. He would also like to know what happened to the dwarves and his guard, but this is only of passing interest to him. At this point, he doesn't really care if the entire keep gets completely overrun by undead monstrosities; all he wants is to be related to the king so that he can become the king.

When the discussions are winding to a close, or when the PCs ask about payment, read or paraphrase the following:

The count smiles graciously. "Of course you are wondering what you get out of this? Well, I am certainly an honorable man, and I always pay my debts. You will receive the undying gratitude of House von Denn, a coin that may prove quite a bit more valuable if you succeed in this quest. But of course I would be remiss if I did not offer something more tangible as well." He waves his hands with a flourish. "If you accept my offer, I hereby relinquish to you anything you find in the keep that does not pertain to a relationship between Houses von Denn and Jorat. There's bound to be fine treasure and magic down there; my family has always been wealthy. These items are, or course, rightfully mine, but I give them to you." He sighs. "Such a sacrifice. But worth it, I'm certain."

Secretly, the count doesn't believe there is any treasure below the keep, and just uses this as an excuse to get out of paying for the PCs' services. (Even if there is something worthwhile down there, what's to stop him from taking it later?) If the characters attempt to wheedle some cash out of the man, a successful Diplomacy check (DC 15) makes him concede to 600 gp each, but only upon successful completion of the quest. Whether or not he'll actually follow through on this promise remains to be seen.

If the party agrees to these terms, read or paraphrase the following:

"Excellent." The count smiles, and beckons one of his men to his side. "This is Lortes. He is the messenger who brought me the good news about the paintings, although if his news bears fruit, he will become much more than a messenger. But in the meantime, you need a guide. Lortes here will show you to the keep and watch your animals for you as you explore. I am afraid that I myself must leave now; a nobleman's work is never done. Take as long as you need to prepare, although if I don't hear from you in a week I'll assume I need to hire alternative help. I will be staying at a hunting lodge several

miles northeast of here; again, Lortes can show you the way. Meet me there after you've completed the quest. I eagerly look forward to seeing you again."

With that, the count and the rest of his men ride off, leaving the PCs alone with Lortes (male human Ftr1), a shy, good-natured lad of sixteen. The party now has a chance to rest, prepare spells, or perhaps head to a nearby settlement to buy provisions and the like. Lortes can lead them to the keep when they are ready.

SURROUNDING ENVIRONS

The ancient von Dorenn keep stands on a rocky pinnacle amid an old, tangled forest. The surroundings are depicted on the map on the previous page. The forest doesn't see much human habitation, although a few wealthy men (such as Count Noliss) have hunting and fishing lodges within its confines. The forest contains no villages or towns, and indeed hunters and woodsmen tend to avoid this place because of rumors of ghosts. Aside from the keep, these stories are completely baseless. The forest might be wild, relatively speaking, but is within the boundaries of a peaceful nation and so harbors no evil. The only encounters the PCs are likely to have here are with common animals—deer, foxes, birds, badgers, and the like. If the DM wishes to make things more interesting, a small band (no more than ten or fifteen) of hobgoblins can be placed here, having fled persecution at the hands of a local militia. These should only be added if the PCs spend a great deal of time exploring the wilderness and are growing frustrated with a lack of action; in the normal course of things, Lortes can advise them of the relative tranquility of the forest and the PCs can head straight for the keep.

THE RUIN

Once the PCs allow Lortes to lead them to the keep, read or paraphrase the following.

You pick their way carefully through the underbrush, moving slowly to avoid sudden pitfalls and entangling roots. Brambles brush at your faces and limbs get tangled in your hair. Finally, several hours later, you reach an even more inhospitable area, marked with uneven terrain, cracked boulders, and stunted trees clinging forlornly to whatever purchase they can find. Ahead, a hill rises out of the surrounding desolation like a skeletal finger, and at its top stands a ruined building, silhouetted against the afternoon sky. Lortes reins in his horse. "That's it," he says. "Go down into the basement to find that wall they were talking about. Good luck to you."

Lortes keeps watch on the PCs' horses, if they have them, while they're gone, as well as anything else they choose to leave in his care. He is a naive and honest boy, and he makes no attempt to steal any of the PCs' possessions.

Climbing the hill to the keep is rough work; it takes the better part of 2 hours to make it to the top. The characters should make two Climb checks (DC 12) to make it to the top. Failing a check results in a twisted ankle or brief slide in scree that causes 1d6 points of damage. Once the characters have completed the climb, read or paraphrase the following.

What's left of the keep is perched at the pinnacle of the desolate hilltop. The upper level looks empty, save for the unnatural howling of the wind; the ceiling has long since rotted away. A few rusted hammers, chisels, and other tools can be seen lying scattered on the ground.

Little of interest can be found on the upper levels; everything of value has long since been taken by looters. PCs might still wish to explore it.

One thing the characters might find interesting rests just beyond the east wall on the upper level. Here lies the corpse of a young man, slumped against a low wall. Above the body is smeared the symbol of Immshin in brown, dried blood (Knowledge—religion or Knowledge—local, DC 20, to recognize the symbol). The body is that of a curious woodsman who noticed the keep

HE SEES YOU WHEN YOU'RE CREEPING

Count Noliss doesn't like other people. He doesn't trust them, either, and he doesn't like sending complete strangers into his ancestral family keep to root out lost secrets. But he doesn't have much choice. Fortunately, he has a means of keeping tabs on the PCs and making sure they don't pull anything sneaky.

After taking his leave of the party, Noliss high-tails it back to his hunting lodge where he keeps a large mirror set into the surface of a desk. This mirror functions as a *crystal ball*, and the count makes use of it right away to *scry* on the PCs. He'll target whichever character struck him as the least intelligent, so they are less likely to notice the magical sensor. If they do notice it, he ends his scrying session and tries again until he meets with undetected success. He stays at his magic mirror night and day, watching the PCs. This has several ramifications, which are discussed at the end of the module (under "Returning to the Count").

while taking a trek through the woods several days ago. He climbed the hill, hoping for treasure or at least bragging rights; unfortunately, he found a ghast instead, the only one to ascend from the depths of the keep. The monster slew him, and drawing on what little intelligence that remained from its former life, used the blood of its victim to depict the symbol of the Master of Winds on the wall. The ghast then lurked around for a few days before the count and his entourage arrived; this is the same creature the PCs theoretically slew at the beginning of the adventure. In the normal course of things, the body of the young man rises as a ghast within a day.

There is nothing else of interest on the upper or lower levels, although you might wish to paraphrase the following when the PCs descend the first flight of stairs into the "safe" area of the basement.

Everything has a look of long abandonment about it—deteriorating pieces of furniture, tattered wall hangings, ruined possessions. No rats, though; in fact, no animals of any kind come within 100 feet of the keep.

It shouldn't take the party long to find what they are looking for. At what would be considered the "end" of the basement, with old, dusty storage areas opening off either wall, the PCs find an opening at the end of the corridor where a dividing wall has obviously been knocked down. Rubble and broken masonry litter the floor. The corridor on the other side has obviously not been used in years, and is also area 1.

DUNGEON FEATURES

The entire building has been constructed out of large blocks of gray granite, and the same is true of the basement. The lower levels are covered with dust and invoke feelings of age and a disconcerting sense of abandonment. Everything—furniture, tapestries, ancient possessions, and so on—are in various states of decay. Ceiling height is generally 10 feet, and the entire area is unlit unless otherwise noted. There are ancient torch sconces along the walls at regular intervals, but they haven't seen light for a long time. Many of the walls, ceilings, and floors bear the remnants of once-magnificent frescoes; feel free to embellish these as you see fit. Most of the doors have rotted away. The door-shaped openings on the map mark where they once stood.

Granite Walls, Floors, and Ceilings: 1 ft. thick; hardness 8; hp 90; Break DC 35; Climb DC 15.

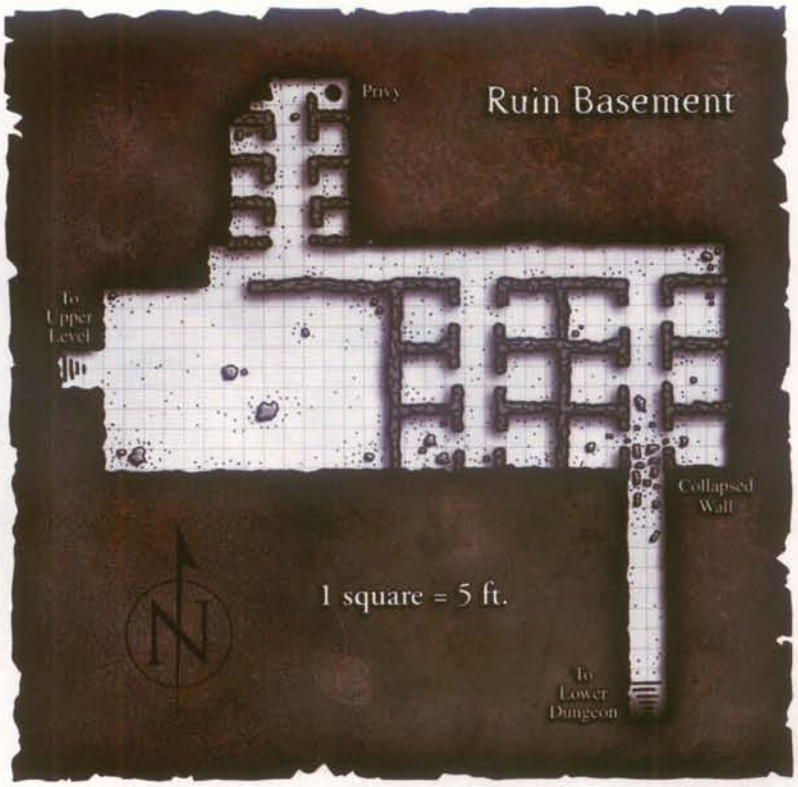
RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Random encounters are infrequent in this complex, and should only be inflicted upon the PCs if you feel they are taking an unnecessarily long time to do something or are being particularly noisy about it. If this is the case, feel free to send a few appropriate monsters after them, such as 1d4 ghasts or 1d3 shadows.

1. ENTRY POINT

It looks like a thick layer of dust covered the floor here until recently, when it was disturbed by someone—the dwarven masons, perhaps. The dust now settles in irregular piles. The walls of this corridor are painted with magnificent frescoes, all faded, chipped, and obviously ancient. The left wall bears the 3-foot high representation Count von Denn is so concerned about: a black eagle wing against a yellow star. This is the symbol of the Royal House of Jorat. Surrounding it are small figures that seem to be dancing or celebrating. On the right-hand wall is painted a scepter, leaning against a large, magnificently adorned crown.

Halfway down the hall is one more painting, which is much more crudely done. It is a dark figure, 3 feet high. The figure holds a sword out horizontally with its right hand, as if pointing deeper



into the keep. The left arm is at its side, slightly away from the body. The hand is open and painted as though it were dripping with a red fluid.

The second painting is a warning that was scrawled by departing monks. Other than the paintings, there is not much of interest in this area. The stairs descend 20 feet into the lower dungeon level.

2. CORRIDOR

The ceiling of this corridor looks to have once been elaborately done; a painting of the sky adorns its entire length. Now, the paint is chipped and faded, but clouds and blue sky can still be seen, hinting at its former glory. The walls are even worse off, although it looks like they might once have been painted with trees and bushes to represent a forested landscape. Now the paint is all but gone, with only the occasional remnant left behind, but it is not difficult to imagine how it might have looked.

The dust, again, looks like it is in the process of settling after being disturbed sometime in the not-too-distant past. The musty scent of long disuse pervades. About 10 feet down the corridor, a lone footstep can be seen clearly in the dust.

The footprint was left by Count Noliss's guard. A PC with the Track feat can tell easily (DC 5) that the print was made by a heavy-booted foot.

3. THE GREAT SIGIL (EL 6)

The corridor opens into a square room, with hallways radiating off from all four walls. The dust is minimal here and scuffed in places. Beneath the thin layer can be seen several brown stains, and in the center of the floor, a work of art, even more impressive than the previous paintings and much better preserved. The symbol of House Jorat has been set into the floor in three types of marble–white for the base, black for the wing, and yellow for the star. Piles of something that might have once been furniture lie scattered around the perimeter. A small block or pedestal sits in the far right corner of the room. A terrible stench of decay permeates the chamber.

The item in the corner is a small stone block adorned with carvings. It is an altar dedicated to Immshin, Master of Winds. Scribed into the wall above the altar are several lines of text, written in Draconic. The letters are chipped and degraded, but a character who speaks the language or succeeds at a Decipher Script check (DC 25) can make out the following:

IMMSHIN, MASTER OF WINDS

"Bloodlines" can be easily inserted into any campaign that includes a kingdom with some sort of nobility. The only wild card is Immshin.

Immshin is the being the monks worshiped when the keep was converted into a monastery. The identity of this entity is up to you. It could be an aspect of Obad-Hai, an elemental lord or demigod in the service of Obad-Hai, or anything else you feel appropriate, although Immshin should be a real being with real power. If your pantheon includes a wind, sky, or air deity, then this would be the ideal replacement. If Immshin's nature is not generally known, allow a bardic knowledge or Knowledge (religion) check to allow the characters to discover it (the DC of these checks is up to you, depending on how mysterious you want the keep to seem). Alternately, the PCs could ask Noliss; he knows of Immshin.

"You are entering the sacred realm of Immshin, Lord of Winds. Display proper reverence or risk his rage."

A successful Knowledge (religion) or Knowledge (local) check (DC 17 or 20, respectively) reveals that Immshin is a minor power of the area long revered for his power over the winds. Success at this check also reveals that the proper thing to do at the shrine is for each visitor toshow some respect by cleaning it, kneeling and bowing at its base, saying a brief prayer asking for Immshin's blessing, or sprinkling the top of the shrine with some holy water or incense.

The smell is a treat from the ghasts that frequent this chamber. They lurk on the fringes of the room, one each down the east, west, and south hallways. These creatures proved to be the masons' undoing, tearing them apart and feasting upon their flesh. An easy search of the room (Search DC 5) allows a character to discover the remains of the dwarves in the southeast corner—a heap of tattered garments and bones, gnawed and cracked, with the marrow sucked out. What's left of the guard Noliss sent down several days ago can also be found here, including a serviceable shortspear, small shield, chain shirt, and a shredded, bloodstained surcoat featuring the charging boar of von Denn.

Creatures: Two of the three ghasts were monks, and a successful Spot check (DC 10) allows a PC to recognize the tattered remains of vestments clinging to the monsters like shrouds. The other ghast was obviously a dwarf in life (the ghasts left one of the craftsmen uneaten, who rose to join their unholy ranks several days later), and its clothing is in much better shape. A hammer still dangles from its belt.

The ghasts become enraged (and hungry) when they sense intruders (perhaps seeing a light source), and are just smart enough to wait for the invaders to move about 15 to 20 feet into the room before letting out hideous shrieks and rushing to the attack. A successful Listen check (opposed by the ghasts' Move Silently check) allows a PC to avoid surprise.

Ghasts (3): hp 35, 23, 17; *Monster Manual* 97 (ghoul).

Treasure: One of the monk ghasts bears an item left over from its previous existence: a pale ivory *wand of cure moderate wounds* (5th-level) with 9 charges remaining, tucked into what's left of its belt. The command word for this item is "shooka-shooka," an ancient Gnome phrase roughly translating as "ease."

Development: How the PCs choose to interact with the altar of Immshin might influence later events (see area **12**).

4. PROTECTED HALLWAY (EL VARIABLE)

This hallway's walls bear faded paintings, all in black, of regal-looking humanoid figures. Not much detail can be seen of them, except for the occasional crown or scepter.

Both sets of doors in this hall have been magically protected against the ravages of time and are both locked. The first set is wooden, the second set iron.

Wooden Door: 2 in. thick; hardness 10; hp 40; Break DC 25; Open Lock DC 16.

Iron Door: 3 in. thick; hardness 15; hp 100; Break DC 30; Open Lock DC 18.

Traps (EL 3, EL 4, and EL 3): The original creators of the keep, the ancient von Dorenns, wished to protect their honored dead, so three *glyphs of warding* defend the entrance to area 5. These are bypassed by offering up a three-part prayer; each part corresponds to a different glyph. The first requires someone passing through to say, "I am of noble intent," the second, "I come to honor the sacred dead," and third, "I beseech admittance, in the holy names of our ancestors." See area **13** and **Player Handout #1** for more information.

The first ward is placed on the door.

***Glyph of Warding* Trap #1:** CR 3; 3d8 cold, Reflex DC 17 for half damage; Search DC 28, Disable Device DC 28.

The second glyph is activated when someone crosses the hall at the spot marked X on the map. Activation of the glyph triggers a *summon monster III* spell, summoning an azer that immediately attacks the intruder (gaining automatic surprise). The azer fights for 6 rounds or until slain.

Azer: hp 12; *Monster Manual* 22.

***Glyph of Warding* #2:** CR 4; *summon monster III* (azer); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28.

The final *glyph* wards the iron doors leading to area 5. It is identical to the first glyph.

***Glyph of Warding* Trap #3:** CR 3; 3d8 cold, Reflex DC 17 for half damage; Search DC 28, Disable Device DC 28.

5. MAUSOLEUM (EL 6)

The bare walls of this 30-foot-long room are lined with carved, standing sarcophagi. An odd smell hangs heavy in the air—a sweet, pungent aroma, reminiscent of a spice cabinet.

This mausoleum is where the original inhabitants of the keep entombed their deceased. The dark energies that have permeated the place have affected the dead, animating them into horrific caricatures of their former selves.

The sarcophagi are carved with flowing, elegant, but meaningless designs. The center of each lid contains a bare stone plaque, on which is inscribed the name of its occupant, along with birth and death dates. The dead here were all von Dorenn nobility in life, or else trusted and valued allies of their House (such as the cleric Septimus—see **Player Handouts #1** and **#2**).

The odd smell in this chamber is due to the chemicals that were used to prepare the dead long ago. If the PCs stay in this room for more than a 3 rounds, three mummies push aside their tomb lids and shuffle to the attack, groans emanating from their long-dead throats (neither side is surprised).

Creatures: Astute characters notice that one of the mummies is missing its left hand (Spot check DC 13). See **Treasure #2**, below, for more details.

Mummies (3): hp 51, 47, 42; *Monster Manual* 138.

Treasure #1: The mummies wear rings, neck chains, gold belts, a crown, and other such finery worth a total of 1,100 gp. It can be safely looted after the slain mummies crumble to dust.

Treasure #2: Only one of the crypts bears anything of value—that from which the one-handed mummy emerged. Sifting through centuries-old dust in the tomb uncovers the item on a successful Search check (DC 15): a mummified left hand. If strung on a cord and worn around the neck, it functions as a *hand of the mage*.

6. EMPTY CHAMBER

This large room might once have been a meeting place or a dining hall; now, it is empty of everything except the scattered remains of rotten furniture.

The door leading into this room has long since rotted away.

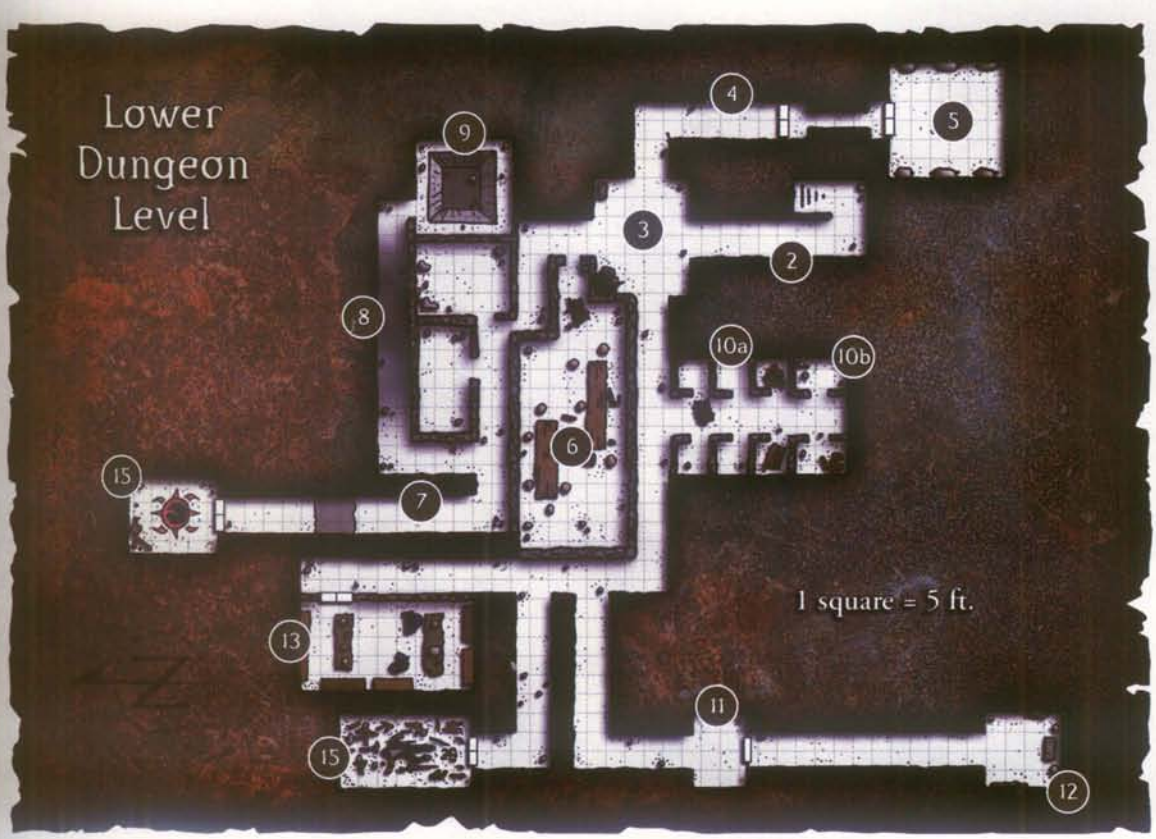
7. HALL OF THE MYSTIC (EL 5)

The corridor stretches into the darkness. The hall is plain except for the a 10-foot-long, 10-foot-wide pit in the floor about 30 feet ahead. It stretches across the width of the hall and appears to have been purposefully crafted.

If a PC peers into the pit, continue with the following:

Apparently 20 feet deep, the floor of the pit looks to be the same flagstone as the rest of the keep, but is painted in reds, oranges, and yellows—almost as if a huge fire awaits one foolish enough to stumble in. It is empty, however.

Area **15** was (and still is) the prince's quarters. This was also where Severi von Dorenn performed his dark experiments on the boy, turning his mind farther from sanity with every vile word. The wizard took great pains that no one else should have any kind of hold over the young prince (particularly the priest Septimus), and so crafted the pit in the hall to deter curious interlopers (Severi used *dimension door* to ferry the prince and himself back and forth).



The double doors leading to area **15** are made of very strong iron, but a lingering illusion (a 17th-level *permanent image*) makes them appear to be fine rosewood. They look perfect, as if they were only very recently crafted and polished. Gold decorations adorn the smooth wooden planks. One other strange thing about these doors is that there are no evident doorknobs, pull rings, keyholes, or hinges.

The doors are extensively reinforced by magic, and they cannot be forced open in any way (save for *disintegrate*, *wish*, and similar magic that the PCs probably don't have). In fact, merely touching the doors triggers a trap.

Trap: If a living being makes contact with the doors, the offending character is *teleported* backward 30 feet, just above the pit, meaning he's in for a nasty drop (2d6 points of damage). A successful Will save (DC 24) negates the effect, but the save must be made each time a character touches the door. This trap is always in effect, no matter how many have fallen prey to it. It can only be bypassed by using the proper incantation (see areas **14** and **15**, and **Player Handout #2**).

A rogue who succeeds at a difficult Disable Device check can render the trap inoperable, and the magic inherent in the trap can also be suppressed for 1d4 rounds with a successful *dispel magic* (the magic of the trap is assumed to be 17th-level for this purpose). Note that these tactics only influence the *teleport* effect; the PCs still need the proper code words to enter the room itself.

Teleport Trap: CR 5; *teleports* above 20-ft. pit (2d6 falling damage); Search DC 34; Disable Device DC 34.

8. CORRIDOR OF DARKNESS (EL 7)

Ahead, the hallway seems to vanish; a curtain of deep darkness engulfs the passage 10 feet ahead. A preternatural chill pervades the air and a feeling of uneasiness brushes your minds.

The shaded area on the map represents a place of unnatural darkness. Light sources become muted, illuminating only half as far as normal, and even characters with darkvision can only see half as far as they normally could. Intruders entering this area must make a Will save (DC 18) or be affected as by a *bane* spell (–1 morale modifier to attack rolls and saves vs. fear effects). A character who saves successfully is safe from this effect until he re-enters the area.

Creatures: After entering the darkness, the characters hear a haunting baying that seems to come from all around them. It is the sound of two shadow mastiffs, drawn here by the ancient prince's unholy curse; the PCs must each make two Will saves (one for each mastiff) with a DC of 13. Failing a save panics a character (see the DUNGEON MASTER'S *Guide*, page 85) for

2d4 rounds. The evil beings then burst from the shadows, snarling, growling, and tearing at the intruders, only to virtually fade away when counterattacked.

Shadow Mastiffs (2): hp 32 each; *Monster Manual* 162.

9. CISTERN

This is the ancient cistern that was used by the original occupants of the keep. There is no water in it now; there is nothing but dust. The cistern is 40 feet deep and about 15 feet across, allowing but a narrow walkway around it.

The room is empty, but careful searching might benefit the PCs. The far left corner of the room at one point had a wooden shelf; a successful Search check (DC 20) allows a character to find four holes bored into the stone in this location. The holes held pegs that supported the shelf and are arranged in a horizontal line, about a foot apart from each other and 5 feet off the ground. They are each a little wider than a thumb and extend into the wall almost a foot and a half.

There is a secret compartment behind what used to be the shelf. A successful Search check (DC 22) allows a character to discover the release mechanism: simultaneously pressing two small catches located in the two opposite holes. Two stone blocks slide apart, revealing a shallow alcove (1 foot deep, 1 foot high, and 2 feet long). Inside is the **Treasure**.

Treasure: Inside the alcove are three potions. They bear labels in common, allowing the characters to easily determine their contents. The draughts are of *lesser restoration*, *remove disease*, and *cure moderate wounds*, each at 5th caster level. In addition, the vial containing the *potion of cure moderate wounds* is made of fine blue crystal, a treasure worth 750 gp.

10. LIVING CELLS

These chambers served as the living cells of the von Dorenn servants, and later the Immshin monks. There is nothing much left here but the remains of furniture—piles of rotted boards and the like. The doors have all deteriorated.

Two rooms are of note:

10A (EL 5): Two rounds after the characters enter this room, they are attacked by two shadows. The shadows always attack the first being to enter the room, even if others follow. They make full use of their incorporeal nature, fading through the walls and floor, although they do not pursue an enemy who leaves the room. A Spot check (opposed by the shadows' Hide check) allows a character to avoid an unpleasant surprise round.

Creatures: These shadows are the shades of monks who once lived here, their spirits corrupted by the unholy energy that was released in years gone by. If slain, the shadows dissolve into mist while shrieking their thanks in the secret tongue of Immshin.

Shadows (2): hp 20, 19; *Monster Manual* 161.

10H: If a character sifts around in the dust, a successful Search check (DC 10) reveals a large, heavy, wrought-iron key. It fits the lock in area 11.

11. ANTE CHAMBER

This small chamber boasts a large stone door at the far end, adorned with the symbol of the power once revered here. The doorframe is elaborately carved with images of swirling vortices, and a large keyhole sits in the stone frame next to the portal.

Battering down the door is understandably tough, and picking the lock isn't much easier.

Stone Door: 4 in. thick; hardness 8; hp 60; Break DC 28; Open Lock DC 25.

What's a whole lot easier than either of these options is using the key from area **10h**. It slides in easily, and with a twist a click is heard and the stone door slides gratingly up into the ceiling. Twisting the key back closes the door; the key can be removed in either position. The ceiling height in the passage beyond doubles to 20 feet. There is a keyhole on the north side of the door as well; once the foes in area 12 have been disposed, closing the door from the north effectively prevents random encounters with corporeal enemies if the PCs wish to rest and bind their wounds.

When the grating of the door sliding into the ceiling dies away, the characters hear an odd sound, like the whispering of a faint wind. As the PCs move down the hall, their cloaks and hair stir as by a breeze, but from where it comes is unclear.

12. CORRUPTED SHRINE (EL VARIABLE)

At the end of the passageway is a small room that looks to be a shrine. The walls are decorated with carvings of symbols and motifs of the winds and some figure that seems to represent their master. The stone altar is obviously old and covered with a staggering number of carvings; two tarnished censers hang on either side. Kneeling at the altar is a figure in heavy blue robes belted by a black sash. A sky-blue staff lies on the ground next to it. The figure appears to be praying, though no sound is heard save the whispering of the wind.

This creature is what became of the ancient abbot of the monastery—a twisted and hate-filled wreckage of his former self. The undead abbot does not react to the

characters in any way until they get close to it.

A *wall of force* bars the way at the point shown on the map. Originally, the wall was created by the dark energies to trap the abbot within this small room until he died of hunger and thirst. Now that the same powers have corrupted him, however, he can raise and lower the wall with a thought.

When the PCs reach the *wall of force*, read or paraphrase the following. It might need to be amended, depending on PC actions.

The figure at the altar slowly rises and turns, and as it does its hood falls away, revealing the creature for what it is. Flesh is pulled tight over bones; its face is little more than a skull. Dark pits stare out from empty eye sockets and skeletal hands reach for the smooth blue staff from the floor. A key ring with a single key hangs from the sash, and a holy symbol depicting the same swirling symbol you've seen repeatedly in the keep is draped around the creature's neck.

When it sees you, the creature's jaw drops open and bright pinpoints of light appear deep within its eye sockets. It emits a loud, shrieking howl, and then screams, "Intruders! You dare to defile the sanctity of this holy shrine?" It turns back to the altar and raises the staff above its head in both hands. "Immshin!" It shrieks. "I beseech thee! Smite these intruders with your holy wrath!"

What happens now depends on how the characters interacted with the altar in area 3. There are three basic possibilities:

• If the characters dealt with the altar with reverence, knelt and paid their respects to Immshin, cleaned the dust off it, perhaps sprinkled holy water upon it, then the robed figure waits a few moments expectantly, but nothing happens. The creature seems somewhat taken aback, then snarls and hurls itself into combat as the *wall of force* vanishes.

• If the PCs didn't do much with the altar in area 3, then the wind in the hall seems to pick up and grow in volume until it is a dull roar. Cloaks and hair fly freely in the strong gusts. Thick, rolling mist pours forth from the two censers, and as the undead creature laughs, black smoke curls up from the altar and forms into a belker. With a snarl, the undead abbot then throws itself at the PCs, with the flowing form of the belker close behind, as the *wall of force* dissipates.

• In the unlikely event that the PCs somehow disgraced the altar in area 3, the above sequence occurs except that the wind increases in force and volume until it shrieks and howls, and nothing else can be heard save for the cackling of the abbot. Treat the effects as a windstorm. See the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 87 for details. Additionally, the rolling mist from the censers forms into two large air elementals, and the PCs have to contend with them as well.

Creatures (EL 9 for the abbot, 10 with the belker, 11 with the elementals): The characters are in for a fight. These foes pursue the PCs as far as the stairs leading back to the upper level, after which time

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PLAYER HANDOUT #1

In/46–I am beginning to worry about the prince. He is acting strangely. I am starting to think that this might not be the best place to secret one such as he, despite royal decrees to the contrary. It is not much, but occasionally I'll see him gazing at one of the keepers with a look of— well, I can not describe it, but it is frightful. And he has been very quiet of late, brooding.

I am sure I am merely imagining the worst. After all, he is just on the cusp of manhood, and being locked away with the likes of us probably does not appeal to his youthful sensibilities. Though one would imagine that he would be used to it by now.

In/50–I think something is troubling the mind of our reverend deric Septimus. He has shut himself within his chambers and has not ventured forth, even for meals, for almost two days now. The serving boy who last saw him said the priest was hurrying down the hall with a look of such consternation as to make a man blanch. And I now recall that shortly before, I saw him remove some thing from the hidden alcove by the cistern. What he is doing in his rooms I do not know, but I dare not disturb him for fear of ruining some divine process.

In/55–I learned some interesting things about Severi von Dorenn today, after speaking with Gridla the serving maid. I knew Severi was a powerful wizard, but I never before realized how powerful. It turns out he was once the royal court wizard of the king himself! I knew that Severi was a member of house von Dorenn, related by blood to the king and of a very noble and powerful family, but I didn't know Severi was actually the king's nagel. I asked Gridla how such a one came to be here, hiding in obscurity, watching over this moody prince we're sheltering, instead of at court where he belongs. Did he fall the king somehow? No, Gridla told me. It's just the opposite. When the prince was born with his obvious problems and the king decided he needed to be secreted away, Severi volunteered for the job! It makes me proud to be serving under such a man.

In/61–Oh, tragedy, tragedy! I had never thought that such a thing could occur in our quiet sanctu ary. Sweet Septimus has been murdered! A servant discovered the fact when she went in to clean the deric's chamber and found his rent and bloody corpse on the bed. Horrible, horrible! I have never before heard such a clamor! The servants were in an ungodly state of confusion, milling about like ants, and the girl who found him was positively hysterical. Even we keepers found it hard to keep our heads! Through it all, only the prince seemed to remain calm; perhaps there is hope for him yet. Well, guards on all entrances were immediately dou bled, and extra torches ordered in the halls at night. I pray the intruder be found!

In/63–We received a messenger from Baron Bediss von Dorenn, Severi's brother, and as head of house von Dorenn, the one ultimately responsible for the prince. The message stated that the Baron was sending a troop of soldiers to help us guard against whatever fiend slew poor Septimus. The company includes the famed warrior Tremones the Pure, who wields a blade called Sunrazorl. I doubt this will be much help against the man who killed Septimus, but the presence of such a knight will undoubtedly raise spirits around here. Also with them comes a High Priest of Pdor to administer the last rites to Septimus, as befits a devout deric.

In/65–Tremones and the other men from the Baron arrived today, and they searched every crevice and alcove in the keep for signs of the murderer. As we had already done this several times, it was no surprise to me that they found nothing. The High Priest laid what was left of dear Septimus to rest, but he also spoke out in fear that whoever did this gruesome deed would return with the intention of desecrating our honored dead. Personally, I would think the killer would want to desecrate the honored living, but that's priests for you. No, I shouldn't be sacrilegious; we are all in such a state right now... The High Priest cast many magical traps upon the entryway to the crypts, but we can bypass them by uttering certain holy phrases. I suppose I ought to write them down here, so I do not forget.

The first phrase is "I am of noble intent" said when entering the first door.

The second is "I come to honor the sacred dead" which must be spoken as one passes about halfway through the entry hallway.

Lastly, "I beseech admittance in the holy names of our ancestors," said when opening the door to the mausoleum proper.

In/68–Well, things have quieted down a bit; there have been no more incidents of any kind. The High Priest has returned to wherever he came, as have most of the men sent by the Baron, though the knight Tremones stays on. We can only assume that whoever or whatever this murderer is, we have scared it away. Even so, I can not shake a feeling of dread gnawing at my gut.

In/70–Strange: everything appears normal, but I have been on edge for several days and cannot sleep properly. Perhaps I shall take some medicine.

In/71–Oh, horrible, horrible! The worst disaster ever has come to pass! The prince is the murderer, the prince! Not only is he guilty of Septimus's bloody end, but now he is the slayer of them all! Blood runs down the halls. I can still hear the screams! What shall I do? I saw the prince laughing, red light streaming from his eyes and mouth as he brutally cleaved through men and women! For a sword he wielded naught but unholy darkness! How they screamed! And he, laughing all the while. Weapons were useless; blades could not pierce his skin and magic might as well have been water for all the good it did. What a sorrowful, catastrophic

I awoke to terrifying screams in the night and emerged from my cell to find the keep in a horrifying state of madness. The prince stalked the halls slaying whoever he came across. He must not have seen me, thank the gods, but he murdered any who tried to flee the keep. Finally all the servants and keepers rallied around Tremones in the storage room. I saw it all from the hallway, saw the prince go in, saw the shaking men and women gather themselves around the knight . . . but when the prince entered darkness went with him and it was like it all happened on a night with no moon. I held hope to my breast as I watched Tremones approach the prince. Sunrazor blazing. But the knight was cut down with a hideous cry! The remaining servants huddled together, clutching whatever weapons they could find, but the prince came on, uncaring, and then I saw two more creatures, lurking in the shadows, falling upon the helpless victims. They were terrifying monstrosities—something out of a twisted nightmare! One was tall and skeletal, gaunt, with a wicked scorpion's tail; the other was like a man but covered in clattering, bladed chains. The massacre began and I couldn't take it anymore. But I had to do something. I rushed forward and slammed the doors shut and locked them, then ran to the library and locked myself in. I fear he will find me even here, that prince—he should have been killed after he was born, after they saw the horns and the eyes . . . Is that a sound outside my door? Oh, gods preserve me . . .

they return to lurking just inside the door in area **11**.

Undead Abbot, Huecuva Clr7: CR 9; Medium-size Undead; HD 7d12+3; hp 60; Init. +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (touch 13, flat-footed 14); Atk +10 melee (1d6+6, masterwork quarterstaff) or +9 melee (1d6+4 and disease, slam); SA huecuva blight, rebuke undead; SQ undead, turn resistance +2, damage reduction 15/silver, darkvision 60 feet; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +8; Str 19, Dex 17, Con —, Int 7, Wis 17, Cha 14.

Skills: Listen +4, Spot +4. *Feats:* Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Toughness.

SA—Huecuva Blight (Su): On a successful slam attack, a huecuva can infect an opponent with huecuva blight. It has an incubation period of one day and requires a successful Fortitude save (DC 13), or cause 1d2 temporary Strength and 1d2 temporary Constitution damage. An infected victim must make a saving throw each day. The effects of huecuva blight are cumulative each day until the victim reaches 0 Constitution (and dies), makes two consecutive successful saves, or receives magical treatment (such as a *remove disease* spell).

Spells Prepared (6/6/5/4/2; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, guidance, read magic, resistance* ×2, *virtue*; 1st—*bane, command, cause fear*, divine favor, doom, random action*; 2nd—*bull's strength, darkness, death knell*, hold person* ×2; 3rd—*bestow curse, dispel magic, magic circle against good*, searing light*; 4th—*divine power, unholy blight**.

*Domain spell. *Domains:* Death (death touch 1/day), Evil (evil spells are cast at +1 caster level).

Possessions: The abbot carries his masterwork quarterstaff, his holy symbol, and a small brass key that opens the way to area **13**.

Belker: hp 43; *Monster Manual* 26.

Large Air Elementals (2): hp 57, 47; *Monster Manual* 81 (elemental).

Tactics: The abbot prefers melee combat to spellcasting. But it also knows that a softened opponent makes for an easier kill. If the elementals appear, it casts *searing light*, followed by *divine power* and *bull's strength*. It then rushes to join the fray. If just the belker appears or it is left to fight alone, it casts *divine power* and then joins the fight. In combat, the abbot mixes blows from his quarterstaff with inflict wounds spells delivered with a touch or its slam attack (this means delivering the spell occurs the round following the casting). Also, remember that undead are healed by negative energy, so the abbot can drop any prepared spell for a "healing" spell of the appropriate level.

The abbot won't hesitate to use *death knell* on a dying PC and disables the biggest threats with *hold person* or *bestow curse* (it prefers the third curse listed).

Development: After the creatures have been defeated the PCs are free to do what they will here, although defilement of the altar might incur Immshin's wrath at a later date (your option). Purification via prayers and holy water would certainly be in order.

SUNRAZOR

This blade is a +1 *flaming longsword*, and the fire that licks along its length is of a colorless, pale hue. Sunrazor always sheds a pure, pearly white light. Normally the radius of this glow extends to only 15 feet, but while in the grasp of a good-aligned character it is magnified to 30 feet. In the hands of a paladin, this weapon can also emit a blast of searing light, at 9th caster level, 1/day.

Caster Level: 9th; Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *searing light*, and *flame blade, flame strike*, or *fireball*; *Market Price:* 12,315 gp; *Weight:* 4 pounds; *Cost to Create:* 6,315 gp + 480 XP.

13. LIBRARY

The doors to this room are locked; the key from area **12** opens them easily.

Magically Reinforced Wooden Doors: 2 in. thick; hardness 10; hp 50; Break DC 33; Open Lock DC 25.

This large room is better preserved than the rest of the structure. The floor is only lightly covered by dust, and there is even some furniture still standing, although it's partially collapsed and rotted. Bookcases along the walls hint at the room's original purpose, as do chairs and tables spaced about its center. All the books have apparently deteriorated, save one. A slim volume rests on one table next to a large, dust-covered flask. Seated next to the book is a skeleton, mouth gaping wide, staring with sightless eyes. The skull, and the chair behind it, has been sheared off just above the eye sockets.

This room was indeed a library once, and the doors leading to it are not only intact but also magically reinforced. The original creators of the keep wished to protect their precious tomes from the hand of time, so they attempted to create an airtight seal around the doors by weaving enchantments into their construction. These builders were marginally successful, hence the improved state of the library.

The seated skeleton is not animated and quite harmless. These are the bones of a serving man who hid here in abject terror after witnessing the prince's mad massacre in area **14**. Fortunately for the curious, he kept a journal of many of the events in the keep, and even had the foresight to coat it with *oil of timelessness* (see **Treasure #2**, below).

If the PCs examine the book on the table, tell them it appears to be a diary or journal, only recently started. If they read it, give the players **Player Handout #1**.

The top part of the skeleton's skull can be found 20 feet away, resting on the ground next to a bookcase. The skeleton itself is very fragile; bumping, brushing against, or otherwise touching it causes it to collapse in a clatter of bones and clouds of dust.

Treasure #1: A Search check (DC 14) reveals that lying on the floor beneath the skeleton's chair are two keys. One is small and made of brass; it opens the doors to this room. The other is a large, heavy, steel instrument that unlocks the door to area **14**.

Treasure #2: The glass flask on the table once held *oil of timelessness*, and there is still just enough left at the bottom to coat a Small-sized something (a little bit goes a long way).

14. ROOM OF THE MASSACRE (EL 8)

Two imposing, undecorated black iron doors lead into this room. They are locked.

Picking them is difficult, and bashing them down nearly impossible. The steel key from area **13** fits the lock here.

Black Iron Doors: 4 in. thick; hardness 15; hp 90; Break DC 40; Open Lock 32.

When the PCs open the doors, read or paraphrase the following:

A strange, unnatural darkness spills from the room beyond. A sense of dread grasps your mind in a cold, mailed fist. A faint glimmer in the center of the room illuminates tortured, twisted, jagged shapes rising from the dust like wrecked ships revealed by the retreating tide.

Good and neutral characters entering this room are gripped with such a sense of foreboding that they must make a Will save (DC 12); failure for a neutral character means he acts as if he was the target of a *ban* spell (–1 morale penalty to attacks and saves vs. fear). A

PLAYER HANDOUT #2

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DMs: The full message runs thusly:

I overheard Severi von Dorenn as he passed through the unopenable doors to the prince's chambers today; h spoke in Infernal, which the servants here must not know, but I was able to understand it.

"The throne belongs to Severi."

good character failing the saving throw suffers as though a *prayer* spell was cast against him (–1 to attacks, damage, saving throws and skill checks). These effects persist until the characters get at least 100 feet away from area 14 or defeat the foes here. Light sources are muted to half-range illumination, and even darkvision and similar effects have their ranges halved.

This area radiates strong Conjuration magic. A successful *dispel magic* cast against a 15th-level caster suppresses both the *bane/prayer* effect and the dimming effect for 2d4 rounds.

Scattered around the barren room are human skeletons. Upon closer inspection, it is obvious that these people died violent deaths. Skulls are smashed, ribs caved in, bones broken and crushed, and limbs dismembered. Many such skeletons lie here, their mouths gaping wide in silent screams of anguish. This is where most of the keep's inhabitants were slaughtered by the prince a century and a half in the past. They rallied around the knight Tremones the Pure, a paladin who could do little against the unholy might of the corrupted prince. The skeleton of Tremones the pure lies in the center of the room, still clad in deteriorating mail. His sword, *Sunrazor*, lies not far from his outstretched hand. It is from this blade that the faint luminance of this room comes. The weapon is detailed fully under **Treasure**, below.

Creatures: This room is far from safe. The edges of it cannot be glimpsed no matter how bright the light inside, and an aimless fear grabs at the gut of living creatures within. Terrible atrocities took place in this room, and two of the perpetrators have been residing here all this time. When the bulk of the PCs have moved at least halfway into the room, or when one of them handles the sword of Tremones, two beings emerge from the cloak of shadows on either side of the room. They are a kyton and an osyluth, and they immediately attack the intruders. Neither side gains surprise in the ensuing combat, but note that Sunrazor can be swiftly brought to bear against these foes.

Kyton: hp 40; *Monster Manual* 48 (devil).

Osyluth: hp 38; *Monster Manual* 48 (devil).

Tactics: The devils do not pursue anything that flees this room, although they do their best to see that nothing does. They do not speak, but silently and grimly set to the task of destroying their foes. The osyluth uses its spell-like abilities intelligently, but favors melee combat.

Treasure: Tremones' sword *Sunrazor* lies close to his mortal remains; see the sidebar for a description of this item.

PCs might find one other item of interest on Tremones' remains with a successful Search check (DC 14). His waist is still encircled by a cracked leather belt, tied to which is a small pouch. Within the moldy, crumbling confines of this pouch is a scrap of parchment, mostly rotted and ripped but with at least one very important line still legible. Give the players **Player Handout #2** if they find the scrap.

Development: Because the osyluth and kyton are infused with, and helped create, the tainted energy of the keep, slaying them partly disrupts its flow. The surreal darkness in the room gives way to mundane darkness, and the pall of cold fear lifts from the characters.

15. THE PRINCE'S CELL (EL 11)

Access to this room is gained by walking toward the doors and incanting "The throne belongs to Severi" in any language. This allows the speaker to bypass the *teleport* trap; such characters pass through the doors as if they were naught but air. Living creatures can exit the room simply by passing back through the doors in a similar fashion.

After a single living creature passes through these doors by uttering the passphrase, the magic of the trap becomes dormant for 12 hours, allowing others to pass through without resorting to the code. (This has the additional effect of allowing nonliving creatures to cross the barrier as well.)

Note that resourceful characters might find other ways of bypassing this obstacle. Spells like *dimension door, stone shape*, and the like could also allow the PCs entrance to the room beyond, and *clairaudience/clairvoyance* and other Divination spells could give them an idea about what might be waiting for them.

Entering the room beyond the ensorcelled doors is like stepping into a wall of cloying ink. Blackness seems to blind the mind as well as the eyes, and a shiver dances along your spine. Goosebumps prickle along your arms and hair rises from the backs of your necks. Inside the small room, all is darkness, although one thing is clearly visible: a huge glyph in the center of the floor, pulsing with an eerie red light. The light doesn't so much illuminate the darkness as lend a crimson hue to the blackness.

An irregular form is slumped against the far wall. Your own light seems to have been snuffed out by invisible tendrils, the only illumination comes from the strobing, blood-red rune on the floor. The flashing light etches a figure in the darkness. Humanoid and skeletal, a long, cartilaginous tongue whips from its mouth and weaves back and forth in the open air, dripping something vile.

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PLAYER HANDOUT #3

IN/43—AH, THE TIME IS DRAWING NIGH. I CAN SENSE IT TODAY. I CAST MY MOST POTENT SPELLS INTO THE PRINCE, BENDING HIM EVEN FURTHER TO THE CONTROL OF MY SUPERIOR MIND. HIS BODY HAD A DIFFICULT TIME HANDLING THE RAW POWER, BUT I WAS ABLE TO STAVE OFF DISASTER USING THE SKILLS TAUGHT ME BY THE ARCHDEMONS OF THE INFERNAL PLANES—THE VERY BEINGS THAT SOME FOOLS THINK ARE BETTER THAN US HUMANS. IDIOTS! FIENDS AREN'T ANY MORE INTELLIGENT THAN MORTALS, YOU MUST SIMPLY KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM PROPERLY.

SOON THE PRINCE WILL BE READY TO BECOME A KING. IN NAME, AT LEAST. MY PATIENCE HAS AT LAST BORN FRUIT. TWENTY LONG YEARS HAVE I WAITED. SIXTEEN YEARS AFTER I FIRST TOUCHED THE UNBORN MIND OF OUR DEAR PRINCE, MAKING HIM MINE. NOW HE WILL GRANT ME A KINGDOM.

IN/53—I RECEIVED A LETTER FROM MY FOOL BROTHER BEDISS TODAY. "MAKING SURE EVERYTHING'S RUNNING SMOOTHLY," HE SAYS. BAH! BEDISS IS NOTHING MORE THAN A WALKING ROCK WITH A SWORD STRAPPED ON. THE GREAT IDIOT THINKS THE SAFEKEEPING OF THE PRINCE IS HIS RESPONSIBILITY. WON'T HE LOVE IT WHEN HE LEARNS THE TRUTH! I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE THE LOOK ON HIS FACE AND I'LL TELL HIM, "THIS IS WHAT YOU ALLOWED ME TO DO, SWEET BROTHER. THANK YOU FOR YOUR TRUST." AS I SEND HIM TO THE EXECUTIONER'S BLOCK. "BUT THE BOAR WILL CHARGE FOREVER," HE'LL SAY, BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT HE ALWAYS SAYS. "THE BOAR WILL CHARGE FOREVER." BAH! EVEN I COULDN'T THINK OF A MORE MORONIC SAYING! DAMN THIS BOAR OF OURS. AFTER I ASCEND THE THRONE I'LL CHANGE MY SYMBOL TO SOMETHING ELSE. PERHAPS A HORNED SERPENT. THE REST OF MY NOBLE FAMILY WOULD DO WELL TO REPLACE THEIR BOARS AS WELL IF THEY DON'T WANT TO JOIN BEDISS IN THE AFTERLIFE.

IN/60—THAT ROTUND OVER-PIOUS LUMP OF A CLERIC IS STARTING TO ANNOY ME. HE KEEPS WATCHING ME AND TRYING TO LISTEN WHEN I ENTER THE PRINCE'S CELL. HE'S OUTLIVED HIS USEFULNESS, I BELIEVE. TIME TO PUT MY PRINCE'S POWER TO THE TEST.

IN/61—ADMIRABLE! SEPTIMUS IS NO MORE, AND NO ONE SUSPECTS "NOBLE" SEVERI OR HIS HIGHNESS!

IN/71—DAMNATION! EVERYTHING HAS GONE AWRY! AND IT'S UP TO ME TO SORT IT OUT. THE PRINCE MUST BE UNSTABLE. HE WENT ON SOME BLOODY RAMPAGE TONIGHT AND BUTCHERED EVERY MAN, WOMAN, AND CHILD HE COULD FIND. I DON'T DOUBT THAT I WILL BE ABLE TO REASSERT CONTROL, BUT WHY MUST THINGS ALWAYS BE DIFFICULT?

Tiny horns adorn its skull. The creature emits a low groan before raising a blade of utter darkness in a once-human hand.

Back in von Dorenn times, this room was ostensibly the prince's royal chambers, but in reality served as little more than a holding cell where Severi could work his evils beyond the reach of prying eyes. The doors are made of strong, magically reinforced iron to ensure that the prince never escaped captivity.

Severi proved incapable of stopping the prince in his bloody rampage, but he did manage to protect himself, and after the other inhabitants of the keep were dead, apprehend the young man and escort him back to his cell. Here Severi, frustrated at this setback (and the failure it depicted on his part), attempted to determine what had gone wrong with the prince and to reassert control. Unfortunately for him, the fell energies were too far along by this point, tearing through the prince's body in an unstoppable cacophony of madness. The doomed youth shook off Severi's magical enchantments and slew the wizard with a sword of darkness born from Severi's own manipulations. The prince was then finally consumed by the wicked curse raging through his veins, but before his ultimate end he followed whispers from beyond the plane and used his fallen creator's still-warm blood to inscribe a glyph upon the floor of his room—a glyph that would ensure that the curse of this place remained forever.

The prince resides here still, although it no longer lives, and it is still driven to destroy all that breathes. Describe the monster the prince has become in tones of darkness and evil, stressing the strangeness of the creature. It is the prince that is (at least partly) responsible for the deaths of all who lived here before.

Severi's remains lie at the far end of the room, a skeleton stretched on the floor, spine severed neatly in half. Close to him lie the few possessions that have survived intact, see **Treasure #2**, below.

This room radiates strongly of evil and Conjuration magic. This is where the power of the curse flows most powerfully. The magic of this ancient blight functions at a 16th-level of ability and can be dispelled like any other magic effect. However, such is the potency of the curse that *dispel magic* and similar effects serve only to censor the curse for a period of 2d4 rounds; the only way to be rid of it entirely is to slay its creator. The energy that powers the curse stems directly from the source of unlife that animates the prince.

The curse has two effects. First, all light sources carried by the PCs are suppressed within this chamber, illuminating nothing at all. The only light comes from the rune, which lends an eerie, strobe-light effect to the scene. This preternatural gloom grants one-half concealment to any who cannot see in the dark, meaning that many PCs suffer a 20% miss chance. In addition, the curse of this room causes all within it of non-evil alignment to act as if a *prayer* spell was cast against them (–1 to attacks, damage, saving throws, and skill checks).

Creature (EL 10): The prince's power has faded some since his death two hundred years ago, but he is still driven to destroy all that lives. The creature attacks with a dark, unholy blade, slashing at opponents with alarming speed. It wields this weapon like it is an extension of its body, rather than following any set sword-fighting techniques (it never tries to parry, for instance).

The Cursed Prince, Fiendish Mohrg: CR 10; Medium-size undead; HD 14d12; hp 92; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (touch 11, flat-footed 14); Atk +13/+8 melee (1d8+5 plus 2d6 unholy damage/crit 19–20, *+1 unholy longsword*), +7 melee (0 plus paralysis, tongue touch) or +12 melee (1d5+5, 2 slams); SA paralyzing touch, create spawn, smite good; SQ undead, cold and fire resistance 20, damage reduction 10/+3; SR 25; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +9; Str 21, Dex 13, Con —, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +11, Hide +15, Listen +12, Move Silently +15, Spot +12, Swim +10. *Feats:* Alertness, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility.

SA—Paralyzing Touch (Su): The undead prince lashes out with its tongue in combat. An opponent that the tongue touches must succeed a Fortitude save (DC 17) or be paralyzed for 1d4 minutes.

SA—Create Spawn (Su): After 1d4 days, those slain by the prince rise as zombies under the mohrg's control.

SA—Smite Good (Su): Once per day, the prince may make a normal attack to deal an additional 14 points of damage against a good foe.

Possessions: +1 unholy longsword, signet ring (see **Treasure #1**).

Tactics: The prince concentrates its attacks on a single PC until he or she is dead, instinctively focusing on wizards or other spellcasters if the opportunity presents itself. Note that the prince is no longer a living creature, and so cannot ordinarily pass through the ensorcelled doors leading out of the cell. However, after one living creature has bypassed the magic doors, their enchantment become inactive for a period of time (12 hours—see above). This means that the mohrg can pursue PCs if they attempt to flee back through the doors.

Treasure #1: The mohrg wears a ring that can be removed after the hideous creature is destroyed. It is non-magical but made of finely crafted gold. Once dirt and grime are rubbed away, the design can be seen: the signet of House Jorat. A bard using bardic knowledge, or a character with an appropriate Knowledge skill (nobility & royalty, local, and so on), can attempt a check (DC 15). Success indicates that the PC recognizes the significance of this item: Only members of the royal family are allowed to wear signet rings. The ring is worth 400 gp, but thoughtful characters probably want to return it to the royal family.

Treasure #2: One item lies intact next to the bones of Severi von Dorenn. It is a fair-sized leather satchel that functions as a *bag of holding* with a maximum

weight limit of 250 pounds. Inside are a handful of gems worth a total of 1,500 gp as well as several loose sheets of paper that functioned as Severi's journal. If the PCs take this, give the players **Player Handout #3** at this time.

Development: Slaying the prince frees his soul and lifts the curse from the keep. The rune on the floor fades away, and the unnatural darkness lifts. Light sources again shine normally. The darkness in area **8** dissipates as well, and the shadow mastiffs go with it.

Ad-hoc Experience Award: Award 10% more experience for defeating the mohrg in area **15** due to the "homefield advantage" it receives from the room.

16. KITCHEN

Once the keep's kitchen, this chamber shows no signs of recent use. A few kitchen implements lie scattered about the room, although none are serviceable. Some half-rotted benches and chairs are also overturned on the floor. The most disturbing sight, though, is the massive, overturned kettle, out of which spill at least a dozen skeletal humanoid hands.

Nothing of interest can be found in this room. The hands were taken by the prince from his victims (after his massacre) and tossed in the kettle as a final attempt at a joke.

17. STORAGE AND LATRINE

Entering the portal to this chamber reveals that this was obviously once some sort of storage area. Ruined barrels and crates lie all about the floor, along with the long-rotted remains of foodstuffs and other supplies.

Off to the left, a wooden door and most of the stone wall that once separated the main portion of the room from a smaller closet look to have been battered to the ground. Beyond the ruined wall you can see a privy. Blood has splattered against the wall over the latrine in a vertical line—about the height someone's neck would be were they using the facility.

The prince indeed caught a monk using the privy in his rampage. He tore down the door and most of the wall to get into the panicked resident, then lopped off the monk's head with one cut. If the PCs search the latrine below, the find the Treasure.

Treasure: The monk's body was stuffed into the latrine, although his head is nowhere to be found. On his corpse, the PC find a gold and sapphire pendant (400 gp) in the shape of Immshin's holy symbol—a gift to this monk from his family when he took his vows.

BACK TO THE COUNT (EL 8)

Now that the PCs have vanquished their opponents and recovered several documents that Count Noliss will undoubtedly be interested in, they probably leave the keep and head to the count's hunting lodge. Unless the party took an inordinately long time clearing out the keep, Lortes still waits at the foot of the hill in a makeshift camp. He congratulates them on their victory and eagerly leads them toward the hunting cabin, anticipating great rewards from the count (or at least a warm bed).

But Noliss has different plans. He has been spying on the PCs throughout their expedition, and in all likelihood has looked over the characters' shoulders or read their lips, and knows of the information contained within the journals. He has, by now, discovered some interesting tidbits. His ancestors were related by blood to the king, which means he is, too. And one of these ancestors gleaned knowledge from fiends from the nethermost depths of the most infernal of planes.

How fascinating.

Far from being dismayed at his ancestor's treachery, Noliss is intrigued. Not only will his relationship to the royal family make it easier to justify his rise to the throne, but perhaps he can use Severi's reputation to lever the fiends into a position to help him. Noliss revels in the knowledge of being linked to these powerful devils and demons, and after about an hour's thought, resolves to put a plan into motion. The only problem is witnesses. The PCs must be eliminated.

Noliss watches them approach his hunting lodge along the narrow, 10-foot-wide dirt trail along which Lortes guides them. When they get within a minute or so of his cabin, he casts the following spells on himself, in the following order: *fly, protection from arrows, mage armor* (making his AC 15) and finally *shield* (increasing his AC to 22 while it lasts). He then exits the lodge and moves to meet the party. At this point, read or paraphrase the following.

> The door to the large hunting lodge opens, and Count Noliss himself steps out. He smiles pleasantly as he approaches you, his boar medallion bouncing against his chest. "Greetings, friends," he says when he reaches you. "I have been awaiting your return with great anticipation. What have you discovered?"

Note that Noliss radiates magic like a beacon to anyone detecting for it.

Noliss already knows what the journals contain and what the party encountered in the keep, but if the PCs wish to debrief him he listens politely and pretends to be very interested. What he wants is for them to give him the two diaries (**Player Handouts #1** and **#3**) so that he can dispose of these undesirable bystanders.

Noliss is supremely confident by now, and he has a flair for the dramatic as well. When the PCs hand over the two journals, read or paraphrase the following.

> Noliss eagerly snatches the journals from your hands, and suddenly he is airborne, swooping up and backward, cackling. He waves the papers at you. "Fools! I am a blood descendent of Severi von Dorenn, one of the greatest wizards ever! And I rival even him. The fiends I call upon will make this land quake and tremble with fear! I shall bend this realm to my whim and make it after my own designs. And you—I thank you for recovering this, but you'll never leave this place alive!"

Creature: The above dialogue might need to be altered somewhat, depending on the circumstances; PCs are notorious for interrupting villains during power-drunk speeches. In any case, play this scene up. Right now, Noliss thinks he can best anyone, and he loves the idea of being linked to powerful fiends. After his little diatribe, he launches a *fireball* into the party (note that Lortes probably fries).

Count Noliss von Denn, Male Human Ari2/Wiz7: CR 8; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 2d8+2 plus 7d4+7; hp 41; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22 (touch 18, flat-footed 21); Atk +4 melee (1d4/crit 19–20, dagger); SA spells; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +9; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +7, Concentration +8, Diplomacy +9, Innuendo +6, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +15, Knowledge (the planes) +15, Listen +8, Read Lips + 8, Scry +10, Spellcraft +10, Spot +8. *Feats:* Alertness, Brew Potion, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Spell Focus (Evocation).

Spells Prepared (4/5/4/3/1; base save DC= 13 + spell level): 0—*arcane mark, detect magic, mage hand, prestidigitation;* 1st—*burning hands, mage armor, magic missile* ×2, *shield;* 2nd—*blindness/deafness, flaming sphere*, Melf's acid arrow, protection from arrows;* 3rd—*fireball*, fly, slow;* 4th—*Evard's black tentacles.*

*The base DC for these spells is 15 + spell level, due to Noliss's Spell Focus (Evocation) feat.

Possessions: The count wears a plain gold +1 *ring of protection* and always carries various other magical implements, including a crystal-tipped *wand of color spray* (36 charges remaining) and a *wand of magic missiles* (5th-level, 8 charges). He also has scrolls of *dispel magic, fly, hold person,* and *web* on his person, which he won't hesitate to use if the situation warrants (he can

always scribe more). He has a *potion of cure moderate wounds* and a *potion of gaseous form*, both of which he uses to save himself if things get sticky.

Treasure: Besides his magic, Noliss wears fine robes and jewelry, worth a total of 2,000 gp. The value of these probably drops if Noliss is hit with damaging area spells like *fireball* or *lightning bolt*, or generally chopped to bits, at your discretion.

Tactics: Noliss currently dreams of taking the throne and summoning devils and demons up from the Nine Hells and the Abyss, so his mind isn't exactly focused. He also looks forward to finally using his arcane powers, which he has been studying in secret for so long, and he doesn't really believe he can lose. However, if reduced to 10 hit points or less, he realizes he's in for it and flees as best he can (shouting dire threats at the characters all the while).

It's assumed that the PCs have had a chance to rest after battling the undead prince. You might wish to tweak the time of day so that the characters emerge from the keep at dusk so they want to make camp before setting out for the count's lodge. If their resources are still depleted from combating the mohrg, Noliss might make short work of them. On the other hand, if the PCs had a fairly easy time in the keep, they might emerge in the early afternoon, and Lortes might urge a quick return to the hunting lodge, eager for a hot meal and a bed to sleep on. Use your best judgment when determining when to begin the final encounter.

CONCLUSION

After slaying or driving off the count, PCs might wish to investigate the hunting lodge. They're free to do so, although there isn't much of interest inside. It's a sturdy wooden structure filled with stuffed animal heads and hunting trophies (worth 1,000 gp total). The only thing of real value is the scrying mirror set into the count's desk; unfortunately, Noliss was able to contract a particularly indebted sorcerer to weave a *contingency*-type effect into the mirror. If it is ever touched by anyone aside from Noliss, it instantly *teleports* back to the count's manor house. The mirror resides in Noliss' study, a room which is *arcane locked* at 7th-level but otherwise accessible. Also in this room is Noliss' spellbook, containing all his prepared spells plus *arcane lock*, *web*, and *hold person*.

What now? That depends on the whims of the players, and on whether or not Noliss survived. If he did, he's probably plotting some nasty revenge against the party and fine-tuning his plan to take over the kingdom. The characters might wish to inform the king of this threat; whether or not he takes them seriously is up to you, but the journals provide them with some degree of leverage. The king might also reward the party if they return the prince's signet ring; choose a suitable treasure or magic item worth around 2,000 gp.

Characters might want to track down Noliss, if he survives. The problem is that the tricky count will already have started the process of "clearing his name," spreading rumors about the low character of the PCs in order to discredit any claims they make. If the party lets Noliss live, they've made a dangerous enemy.

Luke Johnson lives in Salt Lake City, UT where he is pretending to be a professional actor, improviser, and author. He swims with sea turtles.

HUECUVA TEMPLATE

The huecuva template is reprinted from issue #86's "Rana Mor," by Rich Baker. It has been updated where necessary.

Huecuvas (Hweh-kew-vahs) are undead creatures created from clerics, druids, paladins, or monks who have failed in their vows. As punishment for their heresies, they are doomed to undeath. Huecuvas are sometimes created when a good or neutral cleric changes his alignment to evil and dies without seeking atonement for his wrongs, or when an evil priest is subjected to a particularly powerful curse by his patron deity.

Huecuvas retain dim memories of their old lives and are often found in desecrated shrines and broken temples, existing in a mockery of their former orders. They often have abilities that parody or pervert those they had in life. They hate all living things, but especially good-aligned priests.

Huecuvas appear as humanoid skeletons wrapped in tatters of their former vestments. Like any ancient undead, their garments and equipment are tarnished and corroded with age.

CREATING A HUECUVA

"Huecuva" is a template that can be added to any humanoid creature (hereafter referred to as the "base creature") with at least one level in the cleric, druid, paladin, or monk classes. The creature's type changes to undead. Unlike lichdom, which preserves the intellect and powers of the base creature, the transformation to a huecuva exacts a terrible toll on the victim.

Hit Dice: Increase to d12.

Speed: Same as the base creature.

AC: The base creature's natural armor increases by +4. Huecuva often wear the armor they wore in life, especially armor intended for ceremonial purposes.

Attacks: The huecuva retains all the attacks of the base creature and also gains a slam attack if it doesn't already have one.

Damage: Huecuvas have slam attacks. If the base creature does not already have a slam attack, use the values listed in the table below. A base creature with natural attacks retains its old damage rating or use the values below, whichever is better.

Size	Damage
Fine	1
Diminutive	1d2
Tiny	1d3
Small	1d4
Medium-size	1d6
Large	1d8
Huge	2d6
Gargantuan	2d8
Colossal	4d6

Special Attacks: A huecuva retains all the special attacks of the base creature. In addition, huecuva expose any victims hit with a natural attack to a deadly disease known as huecuva blight.

Huecuva Blight (Su): Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 huecuva's Hit Dice), incubation period one day, damage 1d2 temporary Strength and 1d2 temporary Constitution. An infected victim must make a saving throw each day. The effects of huecuva blight are cumulative each day until the victim reaches 0 Constitution (and dies), makes two consecutive successful saves, or receives magical treatment (such as a remove disease spell).

Special Qualities: Huecuvas retain all the special qualities of the base creature and also gains the undead type. They also gain the following additional qualities.

Turn Resistance (Ex): A huecuva has turn resistance +2.

Damage Reduction (Ex): A huecuva has damage reduction 15/silver.

Darkvision (Ex): A huecuva has darkvision to a range of 60 feet.

Class Abilities: A huecuva retains access to all of the abilities of any classes it possessed in life, provided the alignment change doesn't prevent access to those abilities.

In addition, a huecuva gains the ability to cast divine spells as a cleric with levels equal to the base creature's Hit Dice. So a 2nd-level human druid who becomes a huecuva gains the spellcasting ability of a 2nd-level cleric in addition to its druid spellcasting ability (although it remains a 2-HD creature). A cleric who becomes a huecuva gains two more cleric levels, including 2d12 more HD and any increase in base attack bonus or base saving throw bonuses. Thus, a 5th-level cleric becomes a 7th-level cleric upon becoming a huecuva, gaining commensurate increases in base attack bonus and saving throw bonuses.

Huecuva have access to the Death and Evil domains.

A creature that becomes a huecuva also experiences a shift in alignment, becoming evil and corrupt as a result of its journey into undeath. The specific alignment varies depending on the circumstance of the huecuva's undeath, but the creature's alignment on the good-evil axis must always be evil. Note that a change in alignment might remove access to certain class abilities (such is automatically the case with paladins who become huecuvas).

Paladin huecuvas are distinct in another way. Fallen from grace, they gain special abilities much like fallen paladins who become blackguards. See **Table 2–12: Fall Paladin Blackguard Abilities** in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 32, to determine a paladin become huecuva's special abilities.

Saves: Same as the base creature.

Abilities: Change from the base creature as follows: Str +2, Dex +0, Int –6, Wis +2, Cha +2. As undead creatures, huecuva have no Constitution score.

Skills: Same as the base creature.

Feats: Huecuvas gain the Toughness feat for free. Otherwise, same as the base creature.

Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground
Organization: Solitary or gang (2–12)
Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature +2
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Any evil
Advancement: By character class

The 1st Edition huecuva from the *Fiend Folio*. *by Russ Nicholson.*

THE LAST HUNT

BY JAMES WILBER

ARTWORK BY RON SPENCER · CARTOGRAPHY BY CRAIG ZIPSE

Magic Items · Monsters · NPCs · Objects · Settlements · Traps

"The Last Hunt" is a short D&D adventure for four 4th-level characters. Having a barbarian, druid, ranger or someone with woodland skills would be helpful, but it isn't necessary to play the adventure. This module can be set in any feudal style campaign area with a temperate forest.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Twice now, local woodsmen have been found slaughtered by a gigantic, ferocious, man-eating bear. No one was able to determine the perpetrator of the attacks, until the third time, when an old lumberjack, Evrehm, was able to climb a tree and wait until the beast lost interest. When he could finally escape, Evrehm knew exactly what he should do. Instead of going to his own lord, he went to the neighboring fiefdom and told Lord Algen of the mad bear.

Lord Johannes Algen has been fond of hunting all his life. His skills at tracking and hawking are known to all who make their living from the woods. His collection of trophies is said to be the most impressive display of wild animals outside of the Royal Zoo. Even though Lord Algen is no longer young, he cannot resist the chance at one last trophy.

Unbeknownst to everyone, the bear has not been attacking randomly. A goblin druid by the name of Sheesek has been using *dominate animal* spells to provoke the creature into attacking. Sheesek wants to make a new home for her tribe—the Biting Wildlings—in the wood. She knows that until her tribe is able to establish a fortified base, the human lords in the area will easily push them out. She intends to set up a series of animal attacks, making the locals believe that the woods are too dangerous for travel. When she is certain that human presence in the woods is minimal, her goblin tribe can move in secretly and establish a base of operations her clan can later expand into a settlement.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

Sir Harold Algen, Lord Algen's son, asks for the character's help. Harold believes, probably with good cause, that his father is much too old to be hunting big game. He offers them a total of 150 gp, and the right to hunt and trap on his land, in exchange for the PCs escorting his father on his last hunt. The PCs are to pose as huntsmen, hired to track the bear, all the while making sure that Lord Algen never becomes endangered by the creature.

Of course, things get complicated. To start with, Lord Algen is aware of his son's concern; he might not have the same spring in his step, but his mind is as sharp as it has ever been. He doesn't like the notion of having "babysitters" and intends to lose the party at the first opportunity.

To make things worse, the bear actually inhabits a part of the forest owned by one Lord Fernier. Lord Fernier has witnessed Lord Algen stomping through his lands for the last time. He gets word of Lord Algen's latest quarry and intends to put an end to his poaching once and for all.

The goblin Sheesek is also aware that a hunt is on and intends to protect the bear, which is the fiercest animal at her disposal, by setting traps for the would-be hunters. She does what she can to keep the goblin presence in the wood a secret, but attacks openly with her band of goblin scouts if things take a turn for the worse.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The adventure assumes that the PCs encounter Lord Algen and his son while traveling. If this does not suit your needs, the characters can also become involved in several other ways:

- The characters are hired to retrieve a rare herb that grows in the Chalsem Wood.
- They can come upon Lord Algen traveling through the woods, learn of the reason for his presence, and realize that the hunt might be more than he can handle.
- They are tracking a band of goblins that are moving across country. When they reach the Chalsem Wood, they are approached by a woodsman who tells them about the bear and Lord Algen. The fellow fears that his lord, who is especially loved by the common folk, might be in over his head.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

"The Last Hunt" consists of five encounters. The first encounter is the character's initial meeting with Lord Algen and his son. The next three encounters—the goblin scouts, the ettercaps, and the meeting with Lord Fernier—can occur in any order. The final encounter, with the bear, should be left til the end to preserve its impact. It is up to the characters as to which path they take through the forest. Lord Algen wishes to spend two days hunting in the forest. When the characters camp for the night, they are ambushed by the goblins (see the "Goblin Scouts" sidebar).

Because there are only four combat encounters in this adventure, Encounter Levels are slightly higher than normal. You might wish to add to this adventure by using the rules on page 133 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, Building Wilderness Encounter Tables.

THE MEETING

While the characters are traveling, they come to a village and witness an argument between father and son. Read or paraphrase the following:

> In the mid-morning, you come upon a picturesque village. Low cottages with stone walls line the road and fat cattle move slowly in the fields. Atop a manor house on the edge of town, you see a flag flying—a boar's head on a green field—signaling that the lord is in residence.
>
> Voices carry from the manor, and you hear the sounds of an argument. Near the manor stables, you see a peasant holding the reins of a warhorse. Next to the horse, an old man with gray hair, wearing light armor, is struggling with the saddle. Although his hands seem practiced, he is having a hard time

lifting it onto the back of the tall horse.

Behind him, a young man dressed in fine clothing of green and gold is yelling to get the old man's attention.

"Father! Father!" He pauses, struggling for the right words. "My Lord!"

The old man stops and looks back at him grimly.

"Father, please—there are other men worthy of the task."

The old man looks at him grimly, "Aye, perhaps, but this bear is a killer. He has killed before, and he'll kill again. It is my right, and my duty."

"Please father," the young man says again. "Let me at least find you some huntsmen."

"There is no time," the old man says with resolve. "Now where is my damn spear?"

With that, the old man walks into the stable. The young noble stands there for a moment, deep in thought. He looks up when he hears the sound of your approach, and you notice his eyes passing over your arms and equipment.

His eyes brighten, and he shouts out to you. "You there, hold! I would like a word with you." He hurries out to the road to greet you.

The young nobleman is one Sir Harold Algen.

Creatures: Although wary of the PCs, Sir Harold has little choice but to try and get their help. He asks them their business first, trying to get a feel for the group's general alignment. He then tells them the story of the bear and tries to enlist their aid. He explains his father's need for assistance and simply offers what he has: 150 gp and hunting rights on Algen lands.

Shortly after the negotiations, Lord Algen returns from the stables with his spear.

Sir Harold Algen, Male Human Ari3: CR —; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 3d8; hp 17; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10; Atk +3 melee (1d4/crit 19–20, masterwork dagger); AL LG; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 16.

Skills: Bluff +9, Diplomacy +11, Gather Information +9, Innuendo +7, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +8, Listen +7, Sense Motive +9. *Feats:* Iron Will, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Focus (Sense Motive).

Possessions: masterwork dagger, noble's outfit, 150 gp in pouch.

Sir Harold is a handsome man, about twenty-five years old, with brown hair and blue eyes. The characters can tell by looking at him that he is no fighter, and is probably more at home at court than on a hunting trip.

Sir Harold truly wants to keep his father safe. Although the PCs seem to be his last hope, he does not tolerate abuse or blackmail. Sir Harold uses his Diplomacy and Sense Motive skills as needed when dealing with the characters.

Lord Johannes Algen, Male Human Ari4/Ftr3: CR 6; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 4d8–4 plus 3d10–3; hp 32; Init –1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 touch 9, flat-footed 16; Atk +7/+2 melee (1d8/crit ×3, masterwork shortspear), or +6/+1 ranged (1d8/crit ×3, composite longbow with masterwork arrows); AL CG; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 9, Con 9, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 15.

Skills: Diplomacy +6, Handle Animal +8, Hide +2, Knowledge (nature) +8, Listen +11, Move Silently +12*, Ride +5, Spot +11, Wilderness Lore +12. *Feats:* Alertness, Great Fortitude, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, Track.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"The Last Hunt" is designed for four 4th-level PCs, but it can be modified for parties of different sizes or levels. The adventure can be scaled by raising or lowering the levels of the main antagonists and adding or removing some of their subordinate creatures.

Consider adapting the adventure as follows:

2nd- and 3rd-level PCs: Run the adventure as written, but with the following additional changes:

- In area **1**, take away one of the ettercaps and half of the traps.
- Lower Lord Fernier to 4th level.
- In area **3**, lower Sheesek to 4th level and take away the goblin scouts.

5th- and 6th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written, but with the following additional changes:

- Make Sheesek 7th level and make all of the goblins 1st-level rangers.
- Give the ettercap two more monstrous spiders.
- Raise Lord Fernier to 8th level.

7th- and 8th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written, but with the following additional changes:

- Makes Sheesek 8th level and give her a 5th-level goblin barbarian or ranger bodyguard.
- Add two more ettercaps and two more monstrous spiders. Make one of the spiders Huge (instead of Large).
- Raise Lord Fernier to 9th level, and make all of his companion knights 4th-level fighters.

Remember that changing the Encounter Levels should raise or lower the amount of treasure in the adventure. Consult page 170 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (**Tables 7-2**, **7-3**, and **7-4**) to determine treasure appropriate to the new encounters.

*Lord Algen receives a +10 circumstance bonus to Move Silently checks due to his *boots of elvenkind*.

Possessions: +1 studded leather armor, +1 large wooden shield, boots of elvenkind, masterwork shortspear, composite longbow with 50 masterwork arrows, heavy warhorse, tent, bedroll, 2 day's worth of trail rations.

Lord Algen look like an old veteran. He has thick, brown hair with patches of gray and bright blue eyes. He is sixty-three years old and has the physical shape of a man who was probably much stronger and healthier at one time in his life. It is readily apparent to anyone who deals with him for any length of time that he is not quite as physically able as he used to be, but he is still a formidable man.

At first, Lord Algen is quite friendly, striking up conversations with anyone in the party who looks like she knows the woods. This is just a ruse: He doesn't need any "babysitters"; he intends to hunt this beast alone, as he has in the past.

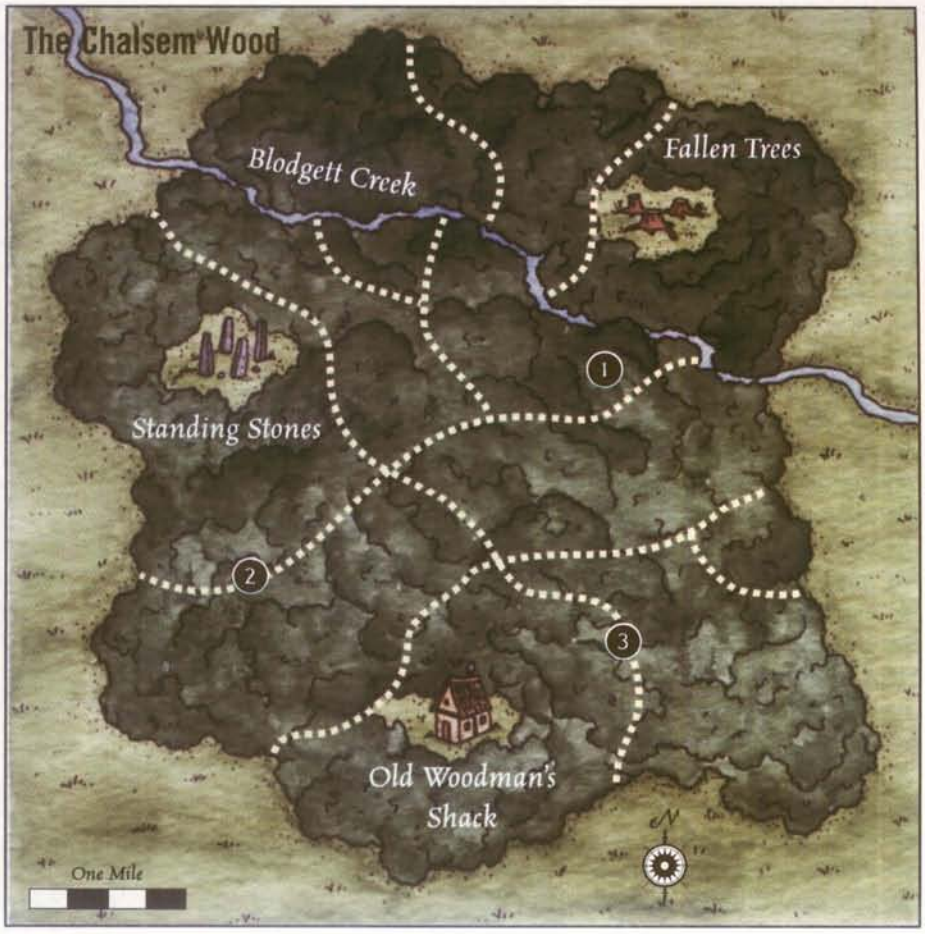
Development: When his father returns, Sir Harold introduces the PCs as trackers, volunteering to help with the hunt. Use the following description, or role-play the scene as you prefer.

The old man returns with an ancient but well-kept spear and grabs the reigns of his horse. With noticeable effort he swings himself into the saddle.

Sir Harold stands before him, motioning for the party to come forward.

"My Lord, these fine people have volunteered to help you track the beast. Will you have them?" Sir Harold says.

Lord Algen scowls at his son, and then looks at the party, staring each member in the eye for some time. "Trackers, aye? Well, they look capable enough." He kicks his horse into motion. "Let's be off; there's a bear to catch."



THE WOOD

The Chalsem Wood is a small, old-growth forest that lies directly adjacent to Lord Algen's lands. There are no roads in the forest, but it does have many winding game trails that are easy to follow. Riding a horse on the game trails is easy enough, but anytime a character wishes to ride through the dense underbrush and trees, she must make a Ride check (DC 10) to avoid low branches and fallen trees that could knock her off the horse. Riding faster than normal speed, or riding through the forest during combat, raises the difficulty on the Ride check to DC 20. In combat, Ride checks must be made every round.

SETTING OUT

Read the following as the characters set out on the hunt:

This small woodland is quite picturesque. Majestic oak tress and a few small pines provide a cooling shade, although they are not dense enough to make the forest dark. Small animals can be seen skittering about, and the pleasant aroma of wild flowers fills the area.

Lord Algen smiles and remarks that this is a perfect day for hunting.

The characters approach the wood from the west. Lord Algen suggests that the PCs follow the many game trails that lead through the forest. He allows them to pick which path to take.

Development: Anytime it seems like the party is not paying attention, Lord Algen sneaks off into the woods. Make opposed checks using the party's Spot versus Lord Algen's Hide. If he manages to get away, the PCs have to track him down using the Track feat. Finding and catching up with Lord Algen requires a Wilderness Lore check (DC 20), due to his intimate knowledge of the woods. He attempts to hide from the party as long as he can. If caught, he turns into the grumpy old man that he really is, although he shows a grudging respect for the adventurers.

If the PCs fail to find Lord Algen when he slips away, they might find him later on, after he has gotten himself into trouble.

GOBLIN SCOUTS (EL 4)

Although Sheesek's goblin tribe is trying to remain hidden, they do not pass up what they perceive as an easy kill. Her scouts, Glub and Mokar, find and attack anyone spending the night in the woods.

Creatures: The goblins prefer to wait until a foe is encamped before attacking. They attempt to stay out of the range of any light source the party might have, spreading out in a circle to surround the encampment (make opposed Spot versus Hide rolls, modifying for darkness).

Glub and Mokar, Male Goblin Rgr1 (2): CR 1; Small Humanoid (goblinoid) (4 ft. tall); HD 1d10+1; hp 13, 11; Init +3; AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 16; Atk +4 melee (1d6+1/crit 19–20, masterwork shortsword), or +5 ranged (1d6+1/crit ×3, mighty composite shortbow [Str +1]); SA favored enemy (humans); SQ darkvision 60 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 12, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Hide +9, Listen +5, Move Silently +9*, Spot +5, Wilderness Lore +5. *Feats:* Point Blank Shot, Track.

*Goblins receive a +4 racial bonus to Move Silently checks.

Possessions: potion of cure light wounds, chain shirt, small wooden shield, masterwork short sword, mighty composite shortbow [Str +1] with 40 arrows, three flasks of alchemist's fire, sack with 1d10 sp.

Goblins (4): hp 6, 5, 4, 4, 4, 3; *Monster Manual* 107.

All goblins in the scouting party have shortbows instead of javelins.

Tactics: The goblin scouts begin the attack by lobbing their jars of alchemist's fire at any tents (AC 4) or those sleeping out in the open. They then attack with their bows. If any of the characters charge the goblins, they attempt to swarm a lone PC. If half or more of the goblins are killed, they fade into the night, separating to throw off pursuit.

1. ETTERCAP'S TRAP (EL VARIABLE)

Sheesek the goblin has made a loose alliance with a pair of ettercaps and their two monstrous spider pets that live within the forest. From time to time, she brings the ettercaps food and the ettercaps have agreed to leave the bear and her goblins alone. Sheesek has also ordered her goblin troops to dig pit traps to help the ettercaps catch prey.

The bear's tracks lead right to this area. Sheesek herds it through the ettercaps' lair every day to insure that fresh tracks lead any interlopers toward the ettercaps and their spiders.

Traps (EL 1/2 each): The pits are covered with old spider webbing, with fallen leaves and sticks woven in, making them camouflaged. The pit on the trail is large enough for a horse to fall in.

Pit Traps (10 ft. Deep): CR 1/2; no attack roll necessary (1d6); Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

Creatures (EL 7): the goblins have warned the ettercaps that a group of hunters will soon be entering the forest and the creatures have been on alert since then.

Ettercaps (2): hp 27, 25; *Monster Manual* 88.

Large Monstrous Spiders (2): hp 26, 24; *Monster Manual* 210.

Tactics: The ettercaps have devised some fiendish tactics for killing groups of prey (refer to the encounter map). The two monstrous spiders wait, hiding up in the trees above the game trail. Let PCs make Spot checks versus the spider's Hide checks; the spiders receive a +4 circumstance bonus to their rolls due to their familiarity with the terrain.

The ettercaps wait on the ground, also hiding and receiving the circumstance bonus, about 40 feet east of the trail. They wait until someone either finds or falls into their large pit trap, which is probably the first person passing through.

After someone falls in the trap, the first ettercap starts jumping up and down, screeching in a hissing Common, "Flesh, flesh!"

It then waits for the party to chase after it. It runs in a circle, passing as close as it can between the other pit traps (same as above)—sometimes leaping corners of the traps or otherwise passing through the trapped squares without setting them off—and the nets of webbing that the two monstrous spiders have made in an attempt to catch its pursuers (for rules on monstrous spider webs, see the *Monster Manual*, page 208).

The ettercap attempts to make a complete circle past the traps, where the second ettercap is waiting. Hopefully, after it has thrown off enough pursuers, the two ettercaps turn and attack those who remain. If the first ettercap gets cornered, it climbs a tree and the second ettercap then reveals itself to draw the party's attacks.

Meanwhile, the monstrous spiders attack anyone caught in the pits or the webs. The spiders bite and then retreat, per their training, either climbing back into the trees or moving on to the next victim, waiting until their poison takes its full effect.

Treasure: With a successful Search check (DC 20), the PCs find the corpse of a ranger, covered in old webbing. All of the equipment on the corpse is useless, but it has 300 gp in a pouch.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Award 10% more experience for defeating the ettercaps and spiders due to the

challenge of battling the creatures in terrain that heavily favors them.

2. LORD FERNIER'S PARTY (EL 4)

Read the following text, when the characters approach the encounter area.

> The sound of approaching horses and the clanking of armor breaks through the stillness of the forest. Lord Algen winces, as if he knows what is approaching.
>
> Six men in chainmail armor led by a man in plate, all mounted, step clear of the underbrush and approach your party. The lead man has a sneer on his face and anger in his eyes.
>
> He rides straight up to Lord Algen, pointing an accusing finger at him.
>
> "That's it Algen! I have had enough of your poaching!"

Of course, if Lord Algen has given the PCs the slip, modify the read-aloud text accordingly. You can opt to have the PCs encounter Lord Fernier alone in such an instance, or perhaps with the sullen Lord Algen in tow.

The party encounters Lord Fernier and his men in a clearing large enough for their horses to move about.

Creatures: You should make it clear that none of the men have drawn their weapons. This should be strictly a roleplaying encounter. If the PCs draw weapons, Lord Fernier raises his hand in a motion to parley. If the PCs press the attack, the knights and their lord defend themselves, while Lord Algen looks shocked (no action for 1 round), then defends Lord Fernier against the characters (he actually likes his neighboring lord—mostly).

Lord Vincent Fernier, Male Human Ari6: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 6d8; hp 28; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 22, touch 11, flat-footed 21; Atk +7 melee (1d8+2/crit 19–20, +1 longsword); AL LG; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +6; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 15.

Skills: Bluff +9, Diplomacy +11, Handle Animal +9, Innuendo +7, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +8, Ride +9, Sense Motive +8. *Feats:* Iron Will, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: +1 large steel shield, +1 longsword, potion of cure moderate wounds, masterwork full plate armor, pouch with 20 pp, heavy warhorse.

Lord Fernier wears ornate plate armor and rides a black warhorse. He is a handsome man in his early thirties, with brown hair and a thin beard and moustache.

Lord Fernier is angry, but he is also lawful good. He won't attack but defends himself if necessary. He feels that he has been wronged and wants satisfaction.

Lord Fernier's Knights, male humans Ftr1 (6): CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 1d10+2; hp 12, 10, 8, 8, 7, 6; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17; Atk +4 melee (1d8+2/crit 19–20, longsword); AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Handle Animal +3, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +2, Ride +5. *Feats:* Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: chain mail armor, large steel shield, masterwork longsword, net, pouch with 20 gp, heavy warhorse.

Development: The party can resolve this encounter with good roleplaying and/or Diplomacy skill checks. Lord Fernier's attitude is currently Hostile; in order to persuade him to let Lord Algen continue his hunt, the PCs must succeed at Diplomacy checks to move his attitude to Friendly. The characters can retry as often as they like, making a check for every few minutes of conversation. The characters can help their task by giving in to some of Lord Fernier's demands. For each demand, the characters receive a bonus to their Diplomacy checks, these bonuses are cumulative.

1. Make Lord Algen agree to never hunt on his land again. This requires that the characters succeed at a Diplomacy check (DC 12) with Lord Algen (+4 bonus).

2. Make Lord Algen apologize for trespassing. This requires that the characters succeed at a Diplomacy check (DC 15) with Lord Algen (+2 bonus).

3. Make Lord Algen pay 100 gp in restitution. This requires that the characters succeed at a Diplomacy check (DC 15) with Lord Algen (+2 bonus).

4. Agree to give him the meat from any animal that is killed this day, but Lord Algen can keep the head. Lord Algen agrees to this (+2 bonus).

The characters can also receive a +4 bonus to their Diplomacy checks by reminding Lord Fernier that the bear has killed before and might kill again.

The party should receive experience points for successfully negotiating with Lord Fernier as if they had defeated him and his men in combat. If the party fails in its negotiations, but insists on continuing the hunt, Lord Fernier and his men attack, trying at first to subdue the characters. Three of Lord Fernier's men have brought nets, in case the old man caused trouble. They use these on the PCs but they are not proficient in their use (–4 on attack rolls, see *Player's Handbook* page 102 for rules on nets). The knights use lethal force if it is used upon them. If the negotiations fail and the PCs leave the area, only to return later and continue their hunt, they do not encounter Lord Fernier again, but also receive no experience points for the encounter.

Killing Lord Fernier and his men is a bad idea. If the knights attack and the PCs don't just surrender, Lord Algen uses the opportunity to run, heading home as fast as he can (as opposed to aiding Lord Fernier if they PCs attack first). Killing a lord on his own lands makes the characters outlaws and murderers. They are hunted by the king's men and a bounty of 1,200 gp is placed on each of their heads. No respectable merchant or innkeeper will have dealings with them, and Lord Algen and his son disavow having any contact with them. Even if the PCs leave the kingdom, bounty hunters chase them for some time to come.

3. THE BEAST (EL VARIABLE)

Read the following when the party arrives at the encounter area:

> In a small clearing you see a gigantic bear, 12 feet long, with teeth as long as a man's forearm. It sniffs the air and paws at the ground, then charges straight at you!

If Lord Algen slipped away from the PCs earlier, he is here, having arrived just before the characters, and readying a charge against the bear.

Creatures (EL 5): Sheesek and her goblin scouts have been following the bear all day, waiting for the characters to find it. When the goblins hear the characters approaching, (which should be automatic unless the party is purposefully moving quietly), Sheesek casts *dominate animal*, *magic fang*, and *bull's strength* from one of her scrolls, on the bear. Then Sheesek and the goblins hide in the woods.

Bear, Brown (advanced): CR 4; Large Animal (12 ft. long); HD 8d8+32; hp 72; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 14; Atk +14 melee (1d8+8, 2 claws) and +9 melee (2d8+4, bite); Face/Reach 5 ft. × 10 ft./5 ft.; SA improved grab; SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +3; Str 27, Dex 13, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Listen +4, Spot +7, Swim +14.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the bear must hit with a claw attack.

Creatures (EL 7): The goblins wait to attack, unwilling to reveal their presence until their prize bear has been slain or they have been spotted.

Sheesek, Female Goblin Drd6: CR 6; Small Humanoid (goblinoid) (3 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 6d8+5; hp 33; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+1 size, +2 armor, +2 shield, +3 Dex); Atk +6 melee (1d6+1, +1 sickle); or +8 ranged (1d4, sling); SA spells; SQ nature sense, animal companion, woodland stride, trackless step, resist nature's lure, *wild shape* 2/day; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 8.

Skills: Animal Empathy +8, Concentration +10, Handle Animal +8, Hide +7, Intuit Direction +11, Move Silently +7*, Wilderness Lore +11. *Feats:* Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll.

*Goblins receive a +4 racial bonus to Move Silently checks.

Spells Prepared (5/4/4/2; base DC = 12 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds, detect magic, flare, resistance, read magic;* 1st—*entangle, magic fang, obscuring mist, summon nature's ally I;* 2nd—*flaming sphere, heat metal, summon swarm, tree shape;* 3rd—*contagion, dominate animal.*

Possessions: +1 small wooden shield, +1 sickle, wand of cure light wounds (25 charges), *potion of blur, potion of endurance,* scroll of *barkskin* (×4), scroll of *bull's strength* (×4), scroll of *dominate animal,* leather armor, sling with 20 sling bullets, pouch containing 25 gp and a 50 gp gem (bloodstone).

Sheesek is an older, gray-haired, orange-skinned goblin with crooked teeth. She wears many feathers and necklaces made out of bone.

Sheesek's two main goals are making the woods as dangerous as possible and keeping her band's presence a secret. Sheesek can speak Common.

Sheesek's animal companions are three dire badgers. The goblins with Sheesek use bows at long range instead of javelins.

Dire Badgers (3): hp 26, 25, 25; *Monster Manual* 56.

Glub and Mokar, Male Goblin Rgr1 (2): hp 13, 11; see "Goblin Scouts" for complete statistics.

Goblins (5): hp 7, 6, 5, 4, 4, 4, 3; *Monster Manual* 107.

Tactics: The bear charges the nearest opponent and fights until slain.

The PCs might Spot the goblins in the woods with successful Spot checks, opposed by the goblins' Hide checks. When someone sees the goblins, or if the bear is slain, the goblins begin shooting their shortbows at the party. The goblin scouts stay beside Sheesek to defend her, using their bows. When the goblins begin their attack, Sheesek immediately casts *entangle* on the party. She then casts *barkskin* from her four scrolls on any nearby goblins, and *bull's strength* from her remaining scrolls on her dire badgers. If there is time, she drinks her *potions of blur* and *endurance*. She then attacks the party with *heat metal* and *flaming sphere* spells. If she reaches less than 5 hit point, she casts *obscuring mist* and attempts to escape.

Note that if the PCs have spent one night in the wood, they've probably already been attacked by some of the goblins (see the "Goblins Scouts" section for details). Adjust the goblins' numbers according to any losses they've suffered already at the hands of the PCs.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Give the PCs 25% more experience for defeating the bear, due to its advanced state.

CONCLUSION

If the party defeats the bear and the goblins, Lord Algen takes his trophy and goes home, swearing that his hunting days are over. Lord Algen's son is relieved to see his father back in one piece and offers the party the reward even if he did not hire them in the first place.

The PCs now have a sizable boon in the form of hunting rights on Lord Algen's lands. They can profit from this themselves, hunting and selling wild game and furs, or even sell the rights for up to 3,000 gp, if the right buyer could be found. The characters might even want to set up a home base here to take advantage of their rights.

If Lord Algen is slain during the adventure, his son blames the PCs. He goes out of his way to tarnish their reputations with the local nobility.

If Sheesek or any of her goblin lackeys escape, the PCs have made a dangerous enemy in the Biting Wildlings. The tribe is furious at the loss of their potential new stomping grounds, and they might take their frustration out on both the surrounding countryside and the PCs. If the PCs have opted to set up a base of operations in the area, the goblin tribe and their allies could make excellent recurring villains. Ω

James Wilber would like to thank Ty, all the Origins' playtest group, and anyone who has played in a Big Daddy Thwak's Millennial Army event. See you next Con!

ISSUE #95 PREVIEWS

BEYOND THE LIGHT OF REASON

by Caine Chandler

The city of Rutherton has known many years of peace due to the holy flame that shelters their small town. But now a violent storm has extinguished the brilliant flame and the city is threatened from a powerful foe. Can the PCs race into a deadly mine and rekindle the Light of Reason in time to stop this villain? And what waits for them within the bowels of the mountain? Only a perilous journey will reveal the answers. "Beyond the Light of Reason" is a D&D adventure for four 13th-level PCs but is adaptable for characters of levels 9–17.

THE PORPHYRY HOUSE HORROR

by James Jacobs

The pirate town of Scuttlecove has always been a haven for the deviant, criminal, and downright evil of the world. But a new darkness has invaded the town. A secret cult has begun abducting young woman from the mainland for some dark purpose, and it's up to the PCs to find out what. Scuttlecove is a dark place, however, and the city has no place for mercy or tenderness in its heart. Can the characters wade through its cannibalistic street gangs and the dark rulers of the town and its island, among other threats, to reach their goal and uncover the mystery of the kidnappings? "The Porphyry House Horror" is an adventure in support for The Book of Vile Darkness. Intended for mature audiences only, the module will be presented in a special sealed section of the magazine. The module is a D&D adventure for four 10th-level PCs but is adaptable for characters of levels 7–13.

HOLLOW THREATS

by Richard LJ Pett

A marauding dragon turtle is terrorizing towns up and down the coast, and towns are being evacuated everywhere. The PCs, visiting such a town, hear that the creature is headed this way, and the village of Fogly is in a panic. Just beginning their adventuring careers, the PCs are still the only hope for the small hamlet; they can either hide like the rest of the town, or rise to the occasion and try to defeat the terrifying beast. But is everything as it seems? Strange events precede the creature's arrival, and only astute characters will note that something is amiss. Can the mystery be solved before the dragon turtle arrives to lay waste to quiet Fogly? "Hollow Threats" is a D&D adventure for four 1st-level PCs but is adaptable for levels 2–5.

THE EXCAVATION

BY MICHAEL T. KUCIAK

ARTWORK AND CARTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD WHITTERS

Magic Items · Monsters · NPCs · Objects · Settlements · Traps

"The Excavation" is a Side Trek adventure for four 3rd-level PCs. Parties with stealth abilities and at least one cleric are recommended. "The Excavation" can be inserted into any campaign with temperate, forested hills.

PREPARATION

You (the DM) need the core books, including the *Player's Handbook*, DUNGEON MASTER's *Guide*, and especially the *Monster Manual*. Familiarize yourself with the dretch and its spell-like abilities prior to running the adventure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Hurazrod the blackguard terrorized the area for years from his shadowy keep. Last month, a group of good paladins, wizards, and clerics showed up to end his evil reign. They defeated Hurazrod, slew his minions, and salted the keep with holy items infused with permanent *consecrate* and *protection from evil* spells. There was much rejoicing, and the group rode off into the sunset.

Everybody thought evil had been cleansed from the keep once and for all, until rumors of a rock-throwing ghost began circulating through local villages.

The "poltergeist" is, in fact, Hurazrod's janitor. Even blackguards need someone to clean their shadowy keeps and cook dinner. Being stupid and easily bullied, a dretch seemed the perfect candidate. Unbeknownst to its master, this dretch was a smarter than the average representative of its species.

Wretch the Dretch, as it was dubbed, was out collecting firewood with a few zombies when the holy strike force attacked. It hid, waited for the dust to clear, and sat down to decide what to do next. As far as anybody knew, it was dead along with the rest. Wretch did not want to summon other dretches for help, as that might earn it a ticket back to the Abyss. Wretch would have to make its own way in the world.

As janitor, Wretch possessed a set of keys for every door in the keep. It knew of a cache of magical items in the basement. But the holy items in the keep made going inside highly uncomfortable. Then Wretch struck on a plan—why not dig from outside?

So, for the past two weeks, Wretch and its zombie crew have been excavating the base of the keep. It controls the zombies because Hurazrod's last command (they were just collecting firewood) was, "Do whatever Wretch tells you." Also, a pair of ghouls that were turned during the attack slunk back. They now patrol the surrounding area and keep nosy villagers away.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The PCs travel near the sight of Hurazrod's ruined keep on their way somewhere else or due to the rumors of ghosts haunting the area. While in the vicinity of the ruins, they encounter signs that something still lurks in the area. Investigating, they discover Wretch and its lackeys digging away. Wretch is by no means pleased that someone might come and steal its treasures, so it attacks, trying to drive off the would-be intruders with mysterious harrying tactics. When the PCs defeat the dretch, zombies, and ghouls, they then have the option of exploring the ruins themselves or simply continuing with their prior engagement.

CHARACTER HOOKS

The best way to involve the PCs is for them wander through a nearby village and hear the poltergeist rumor. Hurazrod's downfall is big news, and they might be interested in his keep. A higher-level paladin or cleric might send a lower-level character of his or

her order to check up on the place. Animals living around the keep might mention the "ghost" to druids and rangers. Otherwise, the PCs could blindly happen across the dig site while traveling.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

An encounter with Wretch and his crew is fairly straightforward. The ghouls patrol the woods around the keep. Wretch and the zombies are digging. If the party fights the ghouls, Wretch hears the combat and gets ready. If the PCs are especially lucky or sneaky, they could get to the keep, surprise Wretch, and make short work of the whole crew. Wretch is smart and cowardly in equal measure and has no problem fleeing or trading information to save itself.

1. KEEP ENVIRONS (EL 4)

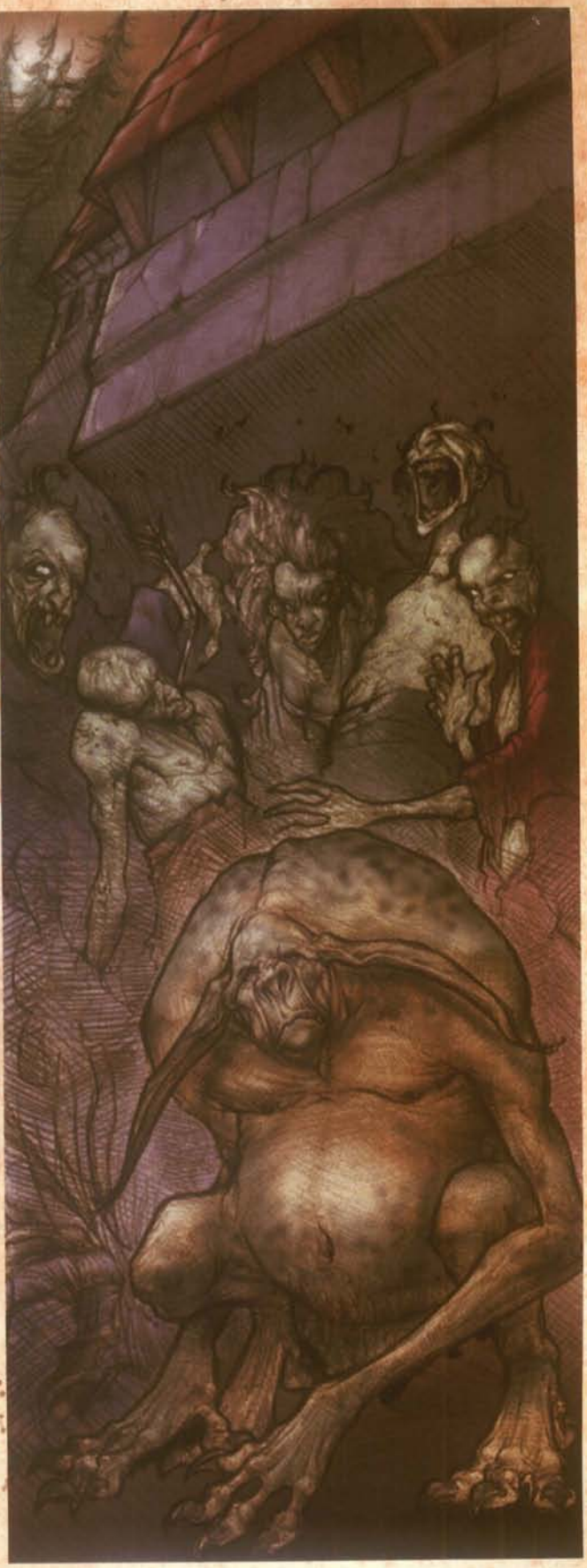
When the PCs near the edge of the clearing around the ruined keep, read or paraphrase the following.

> The forest is unnaturally still here. The natural sounds you've grown accustomed to while traveling through the forest have all died away. About 50 feet ahead, it looks like the trees begin to thin out into a clearing, the size of which is impossible to discern from this distance.

The clearing ahead holds the ruin of Hurazrod's keep and Wretch's excavation site. The silence of the surrounding woodlands is due entirely to the presence of the undead; no woodland creature can tolerate their stench, let alone their insatiable hunger.

Hurazrod's minions cleared the area around the keep in a 100-yard radius. Wretch's excavation site lies on the southern wall. A 10-foot pile of dirt and rocks lies next to the tunnel, obscuring it from casual on-lookers. The tunnel is 20 feet from hitting the cellar wall.

Creatures: At this point, the ghouls have probably already noticed the characters unless they've taken special precautions to stay hidden and silent. The ghouls patrol in a more-or-less circular fashion. Make a Listen skill check (DC 10) for the ghouls if the party is traveling normally, adjusting the DC depending on the party's actions (higher if they are cautious). If the ghouls hear the PCs coming, they Hide and



Move Silently to set an ambush. The PCs notice them with opposed Spot and Listen checks, respectively.

The ghouls comprise the first of the three groups of antagonists the PCs face here. The other two are Wretch the dretch and the four zombie diggers. They're found at area 2.

Ghouls (3): hp 15, 13, 12; *Monster Manual* 97.

Tactics: The ghouls lie in wait until the group passes them by, then leap out at the rearmost character. They focus their attacks on one target as long as they can, hoping to bring someone down. If a character succumbs to a ghoul's paralysis, the ghouls do not continue to attack the creature and turn their attention to another opponent.

Development: If the PCs fight the ghouls, Wretch hears the combat and prepares. During the day, there's a 30% chance the PCs miss the ghouls, since they're less diligent about patrolling and keeping an eye out for intruders. If the characters do make it through the ghoul patrol lines without incident and engage Wretch and the zombies, the ghouls hear the sound of battle and join the fray in area 2 in 1d4+1 rounds.

2. FIGHT AT THE KEEP (EL 4)

The ruin of some massive structure occupies the center of a clearing roughly 200 yards across. Stone, earth, and timbers lie in haphazard piles. Whoever laid waste to this keep was incredibly thorough. The eerie silence of the forest extends into this open space.

Creatures: Wretch is fairly smart and has worked out a defense strategy. If the demon knows the PCs are coming it jumps into its defense routine.

Wretch the Dretch: CR 2; Small Outsider (chaotic, evil); HD 2d8; hp 13; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 16; Atk +3 melee (1d4, 2 claws), +1 melee (1d4, bite); SQ damage reduction 5/silver, SR 5, tanar'ri qualities, spell-like abilities, summon tanar'ri; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +3; Will +3; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills: Hide +9, Listen +4, Move Silently +5, Spot +2; *Feats:* Multiattack.

Tanar'ri Qualities (Ex): Immune to poison and electricity; cold, fire and acid resistance 20.

Telepathy (Su): Can communicate telepathically

with creatures within 100 feet. Wretch knows Abyssal and Common.

Summon Tanar'ri (Sp): Wretch refuses to summon other tanar'ri unless it's about to be slain.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*darkness*, *scare*, *telekinesis*; 1/day—*stinking cloud*. Caster level 2nd; save DC 10 + spell level.

Zombies (4): hp 18, 17, 16, 13; *Monster Manual* 191.

Tactics: Wretch is a paranoid coward at heart, and its tactics reflect this. Once it learns of the PCs' presence, it takes the following actions:

• Wretch climbs up on the debris pile, lays on its belly, and peeks over the top, giving itself three-quarters cover (+7 AC and +3 Reflex save cover bonuses) from one direction. If the PCs circumnavigate the ruins, Wretch takes a move-equivalent action to move around and maintain cover. PCs can make a Spot check opposed by Wretch's Hide check to notice the demon. Wretch receives a +4 circumstance bonus to this check due to its thorough preparations.

• Wretch orders the zombies to lie down around the pile and wait until PCs come within melee range before attacking. They are easy to spot, although the party might not guess them undead until they arise. The zombies fight to keep attackers off the pile. (Note: The zombies perform the last order Wretch gives them. If, somehow, the PCs kill Wretch before it can give a command, the zombies lie on the ground until attacked).

If the group manages to get by the ghouls or otherwise conceal their approach to the excavation site, the PCs must still make Spot checks opposed by Wretch's Hide check to spot the creature. The zombies can be spotted easily once the characters move to the appropriate side of the ruins. Regardless of the PCs' approach, continue with the following tactics once they're in the clearing proper.

• When the party first appears, Wretch casts *darkness* on a small stone. It uses *telekinesis* to float the stone out from behind the pile. Wretch hopes the party thinks the moving darkness patch is a creature and wastes spells and ranged attacks on it. If it works the first time, Wretch does the same thing to keep the party thinking more "dark spirits" are coming out of the keep.

• If the party engages the zombies in melee, Wretch casts *stinking cloud* on the fray. The zombies, of course, are unaffected. Wretch saves the cloud until the best moment.

• Wretch uses *telekinesis* to throw stones from the excavation. It can affect up to 50-pound rocks. There are twelve 50-pound stones (2d6 damage) within easy reach, and unlimited 25-pound stones (1d6). Wretch concentrates on spellcasters and archers first. Its attack bonus with hurled stones is +5.

• The dretch uses *scare* at anybody climbing the pile. Wretch can *scare* at will and does so as much as possible.

The zombies and ghouls battle until destroyed. If combat goes badly, Wretch hits itself with *darkness* and flees, using *scare* and *telekinesis* to keep pursuers at bay. If the ghouls show up mid-fight, Wretch likely takes off in the hopes they can do its dirty work.

Smart PCs have a good chance of sneaking up on Wretch and its zombies if they don't tangle with the ghouls. The antagonists are tough only if the PCs wade into a frontal assault or waste their heavy ammunition on "dark spirits." Wretch hates melee, and only engages as a last resort.

Remember: between ghoul paralysis and Wretch's *scare* and *stinking cloud* abilities, one solid round of bad saving throws might doom the whole party. Caution is the best bet. Also, neither Wretch nor the zombies pursue fleeing PCs beyond the treeline. The ghouls pursue characters 100 feet past the edge of the clearing but are afraid to wander too far from the keep's ruins.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"The Excavation" is designed to challenge four 3rd-level characters, but it can be modified for parties of different sizes or levels. Consider adapting the adventure as follows:

1st- and 2nd-level PCs: The adventure is much too difficult for such low-level characters. A failed saving throw for such a PCs means death in this case. To alleviate these difficulties, modify the adventure with the following changes:

• Instead of three ghouls, the patrolling undead should consist of 1–2 ghouls and 1–2 skeletons (but no more than three total creatures).

• Instead of four zombies at the excavation site, give Wretch only three zombies.

4th- and 5th-level PCs: The adventure as written still provides a challenge to characters of these levels. However, if you want to increase the difficulty, make the following changes:

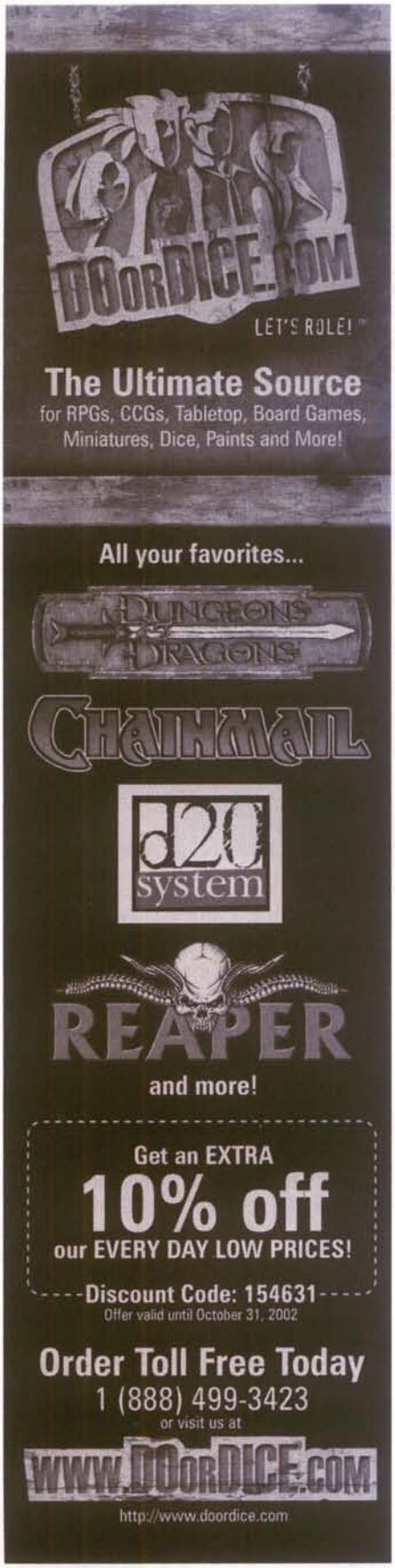
• Add one ghoul to the patrol party.

• Give Wretch 2 more HD, and add another zombie to the digging crew.

6th- and 7th-level PCs: This adventure doesn't really challenge characters of these levels. Make the following changes to increase the difficulty of the adventure:

• Make the ghouls ghasts, and add one ghast to the group.

• Add 3 HD to Wretch. This gives him an extra feat, among other things. Alertness is a good choice, as is Dodge.



SKILL CHECKS AND EFFECTS

Certain skill checks might become key either before the adventure begins or as it progresses. These skills and their associated DCs are summarized below.

- A Gather Information or bardic knowledge check (DC 10) earns the PC an earful about Hurazrod and the attack that felled him. An exceptionally good roll (a result of 20 or higher) digs up a tidbit about the janitor. A successful skill check specifically about Wretch (DC 20) tells of its demonic nature. Nobody knows Wretch is still alive.
- A PC trying to go up the pile after Wretch must make a successful Climb skill check (DC 10) or take a tumble. Sliding on the coarse debris and rubble deals 1d6 points of damage. A character can make a Reflex save (DC 12) if the Climb check fails to secure him or herself in place, but doing so takes the character's full action for that round.
- A Wilderness Lore check (DC 20) in conjunction with the Track feat enables a character to notice the tracks of the patrolling ghouls. A Knowledge (religion) or Knowledge (undead) check reveals the nature of the creatures. PCs who do spot the tracks are less likely to encounter the ghouls unless they set out to track the undead down. There's a 30% chance that PCs who spot the tracks and state that they intend to aoivd the ghouls are successful.

CONCLUSION

The adventure is over when the PCs solve the mystery of the "poltergeist." If Wretch escapes, it returns a few nights later to continue the dig.

The PCs can explore Wretch's tunnel and the keep to their hearts' content. Wretch keeps the custodial key set on its belt.

Wretch surrenders if necessary. It relays its story if asked, and grudgingly gives up the keys if threatened. Wretch knows the keep's layout intimately, having scrubbed almost every inch at one time or another. However, it does not know what Hurazrod stored in his cache vault, or what traps or guardians might protect it.

The holy strike force cleansed the keep of major enemies and unholy relics. They worked very quickly, though, and were not thorough. Anything you want could be hidden in a missed set of chambers.

Wretch the Dretch spent the last few years eavesdropping on Halazrod's conversations. It knows almost everything the blackguard was up to, including the plans of his evil friends. You can use Wretch's testimony as a starting point to almost any adventure.

Wretch is clever and wicked. It mewls and wheedles when powerless, all the while looking for a chance at escape. Wretch wants to increase its personal power while staying clear of other Abyssals that might rat it out. If it cannot get Hurazrod's magical cache, something the party carries might suffice in the meantime. Unless they are careful, kind-hearted PCs might find themselves at Wretch's non-existent mercy. Ω

Mike is a screenwriter living in Los Angeles. After years of contributing to DRAGON, *he's pleased to make the jump to Dungeon's pages.*

CRITICAL THREATS

BY BRUCE R. CORDELL
ARTWORK BY BEET

NAKHTI

Nakhti was born cruel, and he lived a squalid life a thousand years ago. If it were not for his chance mummification, Nakhti's influence would have faded from the earth. But his spirit found itself once again housed in flesh, necrotic though it was. Giving thanks, he dedicated himself to the god of death, Nerull.

Nakhti is a free-willed mummy who travels far and wide, spreading the influence of the dark cult, doing mischief, and stitching together otherwise unrelated cults of Nerull worshipers. Because the worship of Nerull is outlawed in most places and undead are usually slain on sight, he travels only by night and can be found working with (or sometimes secretly the master of) many shady, evil, or undead related monstrosities that develop across the land.

Currently, Nakhti work with a group known as the Reaper's Children—a viler lot he has rarely encountered—whose dark methods he wholeheartedly approves of.

Appearance: Withered and desiccated, Nakhti's facial features are visible through his funereal wrappings—his eyes are like orbs of flame, his nose scythe-sharp, and his mouth mumbling non-stop curses. He moves faster than his slower mummy brethren, but he is still not quick. He has marked himself with the symbols of Nerull with indelible inks and blood: A pattern of skulls and scythes stand out starkly on his dusty gray form. Nakhti stinks of the blood he offers to Nerull on a nightly basis.

Tactics: Nakhti has several contacts who have arranged a courier service to send information to the mummy regarding the success or failure of their various nefarious goals. He also uses *sending* to speed information along. His latest favorite indiscretion is to aid the secret infiltration of mundane monkish orders with monks forcibly turned to the worship of Nerull.

In battle, Nakhti uses a combination of his touch spells (inflict wounds) and slam attacks. However, he never enters battle alone—he usually has 1–2 mummies and 1–2 evil monks (LE human Mnk3) with him at all times.

Development: PCs might discover hints of Nakhti's influence in strange notes found among the bodies from seemingly random incursions of undead. Nakhti can sometimes be found wondering among city graveyards, looking for choice bodies to animate for his rites. Other times, Nakhti might work merely as a partner to another equally or more powerful cleric of Nerull (or another group that reveres the Reaper), and he might be encountered as a precursor to the PCs' encounter with Nakhti himself.

Male Mummy Clr7: CR 10; Medium-size Undead; HD 6d12+3 plus 7d8; hp 73; Init +3; Spd 20 ft.; AC 26, touch 9, flat-footed 26; Atk +12 melee (1d6+4 plus disease, slam); SA despair, mummy rot, rebuke undead 5/day, spells; SQ fire vulnerability, resistant to blows, undead traits, rebuke undead; AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +15; Str 17, Dex 8, Con —, Int 12, Wis 18, Cha 15.

Skills: Concentration +9, Hide +15, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (religion) +8, Knowledge (undead) +3, Listen +15, Move Silently +8, Search +2, Spot +15; *Feats:* Alertness, Improved Critical (slam), Improved Initiative, Toughness, Weapon Focus (slam)

Despair (Su): At the mere sight of a mummy, the viewer must succeed at a Will save (DC 15) or be paralyzed with fear for 1d4 rounds. Whether or not the save is successful, that creature cannot be affected again by that mummy's despair ability for one day.

Mummy Rot (Su): Supernatural disease—slam, Fortitude save (DC 20), incubation period 1 day; damage 1d6 temporary Constitution. Unlike normal diseases, mummy rot continues until the victim reaches Constitution 0 (and dies) or receives a *remove disease* spell or similar magic (see Disease, in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

An afflicted creature that dies shrivels away into sand and dust that blow away into nothing at the first wind unless both a *remove disease* and *raise dead* are cast on the remains within 6 rounds.

Fire Vulnerability (Ex): A mummy takes double damage from fire attacks unless a save is allowed for half damage. A successful save halves the damage and a failure doubles it.

Resistant to Blows (Ex): Physical attacks deal only half damage to mummies. Apply this effect before damage reduction.

Cleric Spells Prepared (6/6/5/4/3; base DC = 14 + spell level): 0—*detect magic* ×2, *inflict minor wounds* ×2, *read magic, resistance;* 1st—*bane, cause fear*, command, detect good, divine favor, shield of faith;* 2nd—*bull's strength, death knell*, hold person, shatter, undetectable alignment;* 3rd—*animate dead*, cure serious wounds, dispel magic, glyph of warding;* 4th—*confusion*, lesser planar ally, sending.*

*Domain spell. Deity: Nerull. *Domains:* Death (death touch 1/day), Trickery (Bluff, Disguise, and Hide are class skills).

Possessions: +1 full plate, cloak of resistance +1, wand of death knell (35 charges).

WORMS IN THE EXCHEQUERY

BY FRANK BRUNNER

ARTWORK BY KENNON JAMES · CARTOGRAPHY BY KYLE HUNTER

Magic Items · Monsters · NPCs · Objects · Settlements · Traps

"Worms in the Exchequery" is a short D&D adventure designed for four 15th-level player characters. It can take place in any major urban setting in your campaign. The adventure can very easily be adapted for stronger or weaker PCs by increasing or decreasing the number and power of the opponents, as noted in the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Rose Worms are shadowdancers and thieves who anticipated using their shadowjump ability to escape the Royal Exchequery—a sort of bank—after purloining the Infanta's dowry jewels (the Infanta can be any powerful visiting noblewoman or merchant). In fact, the thieves were so confident in their ability to abscond untouched that they blithely tripped all manner of wards and alarms on their way into the Exchequery. This alerted the Royal Halberdiers, who now surround the building. Unfortunately for the Worms, the Exchequery was protected by abjurations unknown even to Lord Chancellor Snigrot, the head officer of the Exchequery. These abjurations prevent any form of Transmutation [Teleportation] magic from passing through the building's exterior walls, ceilings, and floors, and they have thoroughly frustrated the Worms' attempts to shadowjump to safety.

The Worms know that a retrieval team will soon be commissioned to flush them out. They have trapped the building and are searching the Vertical Records for a means of unsealing the office or otherwise making an escape. Enter the PCs.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The Royal Halberdiers of the Reticulated Castellan have cordoned off the Grand Exchequery after a mysterious disturbance. A dark and restless force now occupies the building, and at least one high government official, the Lord Chancellor, remains unaccounted for inside. Not knowing exactly what lurks within, the PCs penetrate the royal office as troubleshooters. They discover that thieves called the Rose Worms failed in a robbery attempt and are now trapped in the Exchequery. The PCs must bring the Worms to justice, and they might either rescue the Chancellor or discover that the Chancellor was an accomplice of the Worms.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The adventure begins in a major urban setting. Possible PC motivations include:

- George of Stave, Reticulated Castellan, approaches the well-known PCs at the behest of the King and asks them to liberate the office. "Attend, sirs, the excises therein are for the public dikes, and flood season draws nigh!"
- Whether or not she knows the PCs as friends from her husband's sporting hunts, Dame Wilhelmina orders the PCs to give succor to her spouse, Chancellor Snigrot Ripbark. "I expect help, and I expect it now. You can't just leave my husband trapped in there like common riffraff. What if a portal to the Hells has opened? The Hells are for commoners, not nobles!"
- Returning from a visit in the Royal Quarter or elsewhere, the PCs simply stroll by and see a crowd of gawkers outside the Grand Exchequery.

Due to the nature of the adventure, nearly any other sort of hook would work if the PCs are in a good-sized city. It is especially interesting if the

characters are pursuing another mission when they stumble upon the stand-off between the Worms and the Royal Halberdiers.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

Once the PCs are interested in the events at the Exchequery, they probably attempt to dig up some more information on the events leading up to the attempted robbery. Streetwise or courtly PCs can use the Gather Information skill to find out more:

ON THE STREETS

1. **Renny Blackgums, grizzled bum:** "<urp!> Saw them last year. Er, night. Fell on me outta the wall! <urp!> Then they walked right up to Big White across yonder <waves at Exchequery> and in through the front door. One of 'em was singing, too!" (DC 15)

2. **Martin Glarre, royal halberdier:** "Yes, sir. We sent in a detachment one bell before noon. I'm sorry, sir. All we got back were shrieks of pain. And this." He shows a burnt and acid-scarred human hand, still clutching a similarly pitted halberd, to the streetwise PC. (DC 20)

3. **Lame Timmy, cocky urchin:** "Sure I seen 'em. They're the Worms. Just 'cause I'm a kid doesn't mean I'm dumber 'n a drow in daylight! One was dressed real fancy, and one was singing. The last one was dancing with a shadowy ghost!" (DC 30)

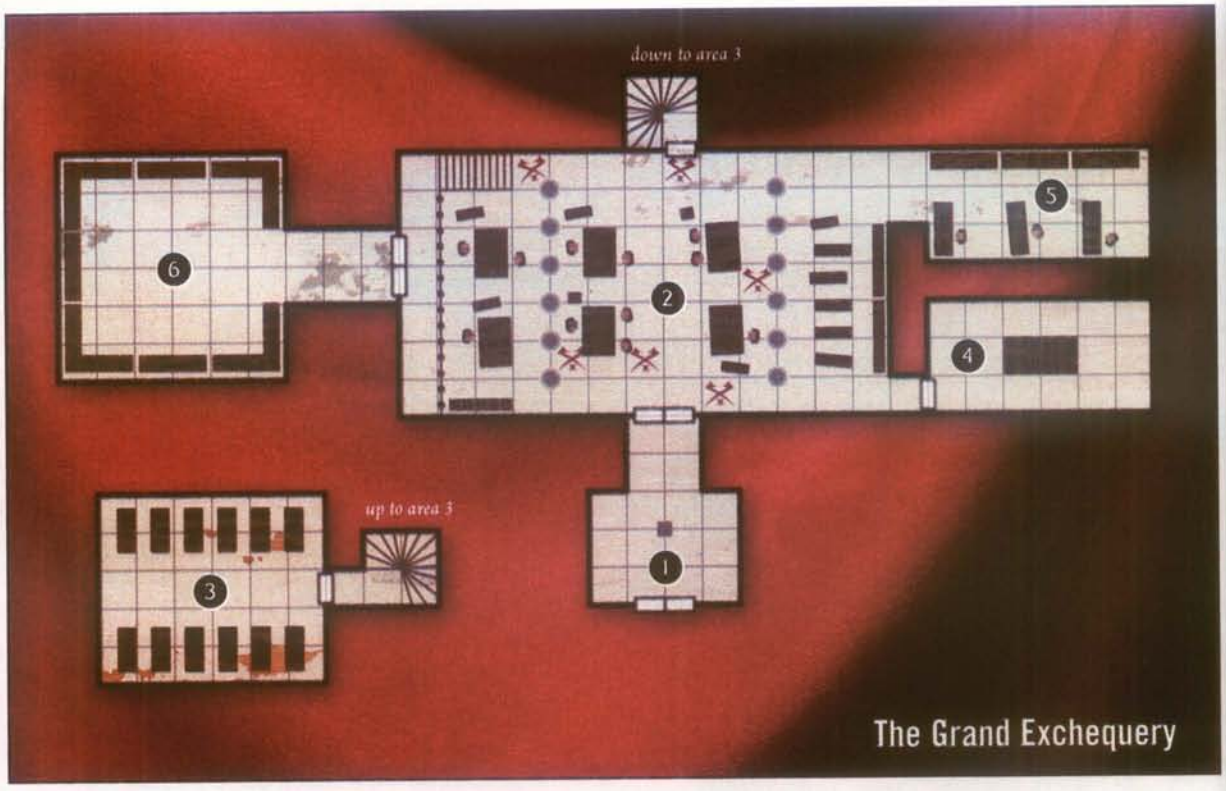
IN THE COURT

1. **Valter Smurt, Seneschal:** "Whatever is in the Exchequery must be powerful. The Lord Chancellor once told me that a golem guards the Embassies. What could stand up to a golem?" (DC 15) Valter doesn't know what kind of golem.

2. **The Infanta, visiting royalty:** "Honestly, men shouldn't talk so much . . . but the divine Earl Mallarme let slip last night that the King suspects Chancellor Snigrot of treason." (DC 30)

ON THE PORTICO

However they became involved, the PCs meet George of Stave (male human Ari15; Bluff +8, Diplomacy +10, Sense Motive +14) outside the office.



The Grand Exchequery

Halberdiers hold gawkers at bay at the base of the Exchequery's marble steps. Up on the shady portico, you see George of Stave, the Reticulated Castellan. From his web-like robes of office he produces a shaky hand to greet you. "Sirs, well met. The court viziers are unable to divine what evil seethes in our precious Exchequery. Several of my own men died to traps just beyond the door. We do know that the Lord Chancellor still languishes somewhere inside. I implore you, do your duty! For the king! Banish all trepidation from your hearts and return Chancellor Snigrot to his wife's embrace. Godspeed!"

The Castellan offers a reward of 5,000 gp per PC, treasure found, and an audience with the King. Bargaining PCs can make an opposed Diplomacy check to obtain either an additional 2,000 gp each or a private audience with the King.

DIVINATION SPELLS

High-level characters are likely to have access to Divination spells such as *scrying*. The Worms are aware of this and have taken several steps to mask their activities within the Exchequery. First, they use their darkvision ability to do their research in total darkness, so a diviner sees only darkness unless he also possesses darkvision. Second, Samuel Blake has already cast his *misdirection* spell on Snigrot, so that Snigrot detects as a table (not evil, not lying, not magical, and so on); this helps with detection attempts and also helps if Snigrot attempts to dupe the PCs into rescuing him. Third, the shadows and their shadow servants skulk within the walls and floors of the Exchequery, making them virtually impossible to spot with *scrying* or *clairvoyance*. Fourth, all three Worms consume a *potion of nondetection* before every job.

Also note that Blake and Coalfinger use their *wands of dispel magic* against any magical sensors that they detect (such as those from *clairvoyance* or *scrying*). Finally note that the casting time for *scrying* (but not *greater scrying*) is 1 hour, and the Reticulated Castellan is unhappy with dilatory heroes who dally with thaumaturgy while the villains escape.

Maintaining a mysterious atmosphere can greatly enhance the adventure. But if diviners are able to overcome the Worms' precautions, then they should gain valuable information, just as a barbarian with a greataxe is rewarded for overcoming the defenses of a hill giant in chainmail. The Worms still remain a challenge even if the PCs know what they are facing.

GRAND EXCHEQUERY

The Grand Exchequery was built as if to withstand a siege. The reason the guards have been so unsuccessful at penetrating its defenses (and those of the Worms) is that the building is eminently defensible.

BUILDING FEATURES

The Exchequery is built of thick stone throughout. Flickering torches maintain the rooms in shadowy light conditions, with the exception of the Vertical Records, which the Worms keep in total darkness.

Ceilings: Unless otherwise noted, ceilings are 10 feet high.

Walls, Floors, and Ceilings: All interior building surfaces are constructed of hewn stone. Exterior walls are 4 feet thick. Exterior walls, doors, ceilings, and floors are all impervious to any sort of Transmutation [Teleportation] magic. The building is basically a large vault, and the builders took precautions against teleportation to prevent just the sort of theft that the Worms intended.

Interior Walls, Floors, and Ceilings: 2 ft. thick; hardness 8; hp 360; Climb DC 22.

Exterior Walls: 4 ft. thick; hardness 8; hp 720; Climb DC 22.

Doors: Interior doors are of strong wood. The front doors are thick iron, but they currently stand open.

Interior Doors: 2 in thick; hardness 5; hp 20; Break DC 23.

Front Doors: 4 in. thick; hardness10; hp 120; Break DC 28.

1. DE MISES FOYER

The de Mises foyer is dominated by a granite bust of Frederick de Mises, founding Lord Chancellor of the Exchequery. A short corridor opens beyond the bust. Fallen in the corridor is a halberdier, his right hand and halberd missing, his body lifeless in an off-color stain on the floor.

The guard died when he triggered an explosive acid trap rigged by the Rose Worms.

Unless the PCs employed extraordinary measures, the shadows in area 2 almost certainly hear the characters enter (a Listen check—DC 10—for the shadows) unless the PCs are particularly quiet.

2. TELLER'S HALL (EL VARIABLE)

Flickering torchlight plays over the wrecked Teller's Hall. The booths where taxes were collected and assessed by royal tellers are smashed. Tables are overturned, and the floor is littered with quills, scrolls, loose coins, and cracked inkpots and oil lamps. Royal halberdiers sprawl dead, mouths gaping in startled rictuses.

The shadow companions of the Rose Worms guard this trapped chamber. When they become aware of the PCs, they attempt to move through the floor and attack from below, most likely gaining surprise.

Any PC stepping on a square marked X triggers a Worms' trap.

The Worms have concealed the door on the balcony by hanging a heavy unicorn tapestry over it. The concealed door is apparent to anyone specifically moving the tapestry or to PCs who make a Search roll (DC 20).

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Worms in the Exchequery" is designed to challenge four 15th-level PCs, but it can be modified for parties of different sizes or levels easily. Consider adapting the adventure as follows:

11th- to 12th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written, but make the following alterations:

- Make the clay golem in area **4** a flesh golem.
- Place only three surviving shadow companions in area **2**, and eliminate their servant shadows.
- Make Blake a Brd7/Shd2, Coalfinger a Rog7/Shd2, and Snigrot a Rgr8/Shd1.

13th- to 14th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written, but make the following alterations:

- Eliminate the servant shadows in area **2**.
- Make Blake a Brd7/Shd4, Coalfinger a Rog7/Shd4, and Snigrot a Rgr8/Shd3.

16th- to 17th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written, but with the following alterations:

- Add another shadow companion (Snigrot's) to area **2**.
- Make half the traps in area **2** *greater glyphs of warding*.
- Make Blake a Brd7/Shd8, Coalfinger a Rog7/Shd8, and Snigrot a Rgr10/Shd5.

18th- to 19th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written, but with the following alterations:

- Add one shadow companion (Snigrot's) and six servant shadows to area **2**.
- Make all the traps in area **2** *greater glyphs of warding*.
- Replace the clay golem in area **4** with an iron golem.
- Make Blake a Brd7/Shd10, Coalfinger a Rog7/Shd10, and Snigrot a Rgr10/Shd7.

Read or paraphrase the following when the shadows attack:

> Your feet begin to tingle with cold. Then the floor erupts with wicked black talons.

Creatures (EL 13): The four shadow companions cannot be turned, rebuked, or commanded except by their shadowdancer masters (Samuel Blake and Coalfinger; Snigrot's companion died in the initial assault). Both shadowdancers have enough experience to avoid level loss if their companions die. There are also two normal shadows, created from guards slain by the shadow companions in the botched robbery.

Shadow Companions (4): CR 3; Medium-size Undead; HD 7d12; hp 45; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (good); AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 11; Atk +5 melee (1d6 temporary Strength, incorporeal touch); SA Strength damage, create spawn; SQ undead, incorporeal, cannot be turned/rebuked/commanded; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +8; Str —, Dex 14, Con —, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 13.

Skills: Hide +12, Intuit Direction +5, Listen +9, Spot +9. *Feats:* Dodge, Mobility.

See the *Monster Manual*, page 161, for a complete description of shadow special attacks and qualities.

Shadows (2): hp 19 each; *Monster Manual* 161.

Tactics: The shadows attempt to surprise the PCs by bursting up through the floor. As many as possible converge their initial attacks on an obvious spellcaster, hoping to drop him via Strength drain. After that, the shadows make liberal use of their incorporeality, dodging in and out of walls, furniture, and the floor to harry the PCs. If reduced to half their number, the shadows flee through the walls to warn their masters in area 6.

Ad-hoc Experience Award: Do not award experience to the PCs for defeating the shadow companions. Like familiars and animal companions, shadow companions are part of the challenge involved in defeating the shadow dancer masters. Instead, award the PCs experience as if they had overcome a CR 10 encounter for defeating the shadows in this fashion, since the nature of the encounter ensures that despite the shadows' low CR, they remain a challenge to even high-level PCs.

Trap: Coalfinger has read (with his Use Magic Device skill) several *glyph of warding* scrolls, and he has scribed blast *glyphs* (that deal fire damage) on the floor in the squares marked X. Fiendishly, he has also rigged pressure plates so that when a PC steps on a *glyph*, flammable oil is dumped from a hidden cache in the ceiling (20 feet high in this room). While the fire *glyphs* themselves do damage, their intense heat also easily ignites the spilled oil, which covers the floor and continues to burn for 2 minutes unless doused. The *glyphs of warding* are triggered by anyone who violates them without first reciting the opening stanza to Samuel Blake's latest pastoral, "The Nymph's Reply to the Gray Render."

Burning Oil and Blast Glyph of Warding Trap: CR 6 each; 5d8 points of fire damage plus 1d6 fire damage (from burning oil); Reflex save (DC 14) for half (of 5d8); Reflex save (DC 15) negates oil-based fire damage (1d6); PCs must save each round they remain on the burning floor; Search (DC 28); Disable Device (DC 28).

Note that the shadows are immune to the fire damage caused by the oil.

3. THE VAULT

> Wide and worn marble steps spiral down from the back of Teller's Hall to a groined granite vault. Hundreds of ingots are stacked here—platinum, gold, silver, and copper. On a wooden table, two small coffers sit with their lids wide open.

The ingots are exceedingly heavy (in excess of 100 pounds each), not very pure, bound in dozens to 5-foot by 5-foot palettes, and should be very difficult for the PCs to escape with, given the close watch the Exchequery is under. Nonetheless, the PCs might amuse themselves entertaining heist schemes, the effectiveness of which is left for you to judge.

If any PC succeeds at a Listen check (DC 20), he hears Lucky Badenbot (male halfling Exp5) whimpering behind the stacks. Lucky can tell any PC who calms him down (Diplomacy DC 20) that there are three Worms, that Snigrot is a traitor, and that a "giant fat statue is clomping around the Embassies. It won't attack the Worms."

The coffers are empty. They contained the dowry of a visiting royal, the Infanta, all in jewelry. The Worms have the jewels now.

4. THE EMBASSIES (EL 10)

> A 20-foot by 10-foot table draped in black velvet with a grid of white thread sewn on it stands here. A misshapen giant smelling faintly of clay lurches past the table toward you.

Creatures: A clay golem guards the table where delegates from all tax districts present their collections. It attacks anyone not prominently displaying the crest of the Lord Chancellor (a dog rampant with an uprooted tree in its mouth).

Clay Golem: hp 60; *Monster Manual* 108.

5. SCRIVENER'S TABLES

Twenty writing desks ordered in rows fill this room. Ink stains on the floor, disheveled papers, and an overturned desk betray a hasty exit.

A Search check (DC 20) in this room reveals the following recent record: "Embassies, Ninth of Patchwall, quorum being present, received jewelry in value of 120,000 gp from the Infanta of Niole Dra."

6. THE VERTICAL RECORDS (EL 16)

Behind the tapestry, a short passageway issues into the base of a tower. Beyond the reach of your light sources, the tower is utterly dark. From the floor to untold shadows above, hundreds of small wooden boxes cover all four walls. Narrow staircases and catwalks access the boxes.

The tower rises 50 feet. The boxes contain records of every transaction at the Exchequery going back three centuries. There is one very steep staircase in the center of each wall; fighting on a staircase requires a Balance check (DC 10) each round. Failure means the character falls to the floor below. Catwalks run the perimeter of the room at 10-foot increments of altitude (four catwalks total); fighting on a catwalk requires a Balance check (DC 10) each round. Failure also means the character falls to the floor.

Anyone moving more than 5 feet into the room triggers the trap (see below).

Creatures: The Worms are here searching the stacks for a way to dispel the ensorcellments that prevent them from leaving the Exchequery. They are searching in vain. There is no way short of a *wish* or *miracle* to break the seals on the Exchequery walls that prevent Transmutation [Teleportation] magic from passing into or out of the building. *Disintegrate* or similar magic would enable a character to blast a hole in a wall, but the Worms lack access to such spells.

Samuel Blake, Male Human Brd7/Shd6: CR 13; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 7d6+7 plus 6d8+6; hp 66; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 20 (increase AC by +4 when Samuel is *hasted*); Atk +9/+4 melee (1d4/crit 19–20, silver dagger), +14/+9 ranged (1d6 plus 1d6 electricity/crit ×3, *+1 shock shortbow*); SQ bardic music, bardic knowledge, hide in plain sight, evasion, darkvision, shadow illusion, summon shadow, defensive roll, shadow jump (40 ft.), summon shadow, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC, can't be flanked); AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +16, Will +9; Str 11, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 16.

Skills: Balance +9, Bluff +9, Diplomacy +9, Hide +20, Listen +6, Move Silently +20, Perform +11, Search +5,

Spot +6, Tumble +20, Use Magic Device +8. *Feats:* Combat Reflexes, Craft Wand, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Spring Attack

Spells Known (3/4/3/1, base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*daze, detect magic, ghost sound, mage hand, prestidigitation, read magic;* 1st—*charm person, cure light wounds, grease, ventriloquism;* 2nd—*invisibility, mirror image, misdirection* (already cast), *suggestion;* 3rd—*dispel magic, haste.*

Possessions: +1 shock shortbow, wand of haste (9 charges), *wand of dispel magic* (12 charges), *bracers of armor +4, ring of protection +2, cloak of resistance +2, potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of glibness, potion of nondetection* (already consumed), silver dagger, 30 arrows, pouch with 10 pp.

Coalfinger, Male Human Rog7/Shd6: CR 13; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. 1 in. tall); HD 7d6+14 6d8+12; hp 81; Init +9; Spd 30 ft.; AC 23, touch 15, flat-footed 23 (increase AC by +4 when Samuel is *hasted*); Atk +16/+11 melee (1d6+3/crit 15–20, +2 *keen rapier*), +15/+10 ranged (1d6/crit ×3, masterwork shortbow); SA sneak attack +4d6; SQ evasion, hide in plain sight, evasion, darkvision, shadow illusion, summon shadow, defensive roll, shadow jump (40 ft.), summon shadow, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC, can't be flanked, +2 vs. traps); AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +15, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 8.

Skills: Balance +17, Craft (trapmaking) +11, Decipher Script +5, Disable Device +5, Hide +31, Jump +11, Listen +9, Move Silently +20, Open Lock +11, Perform +4, Pick Pocket +12, Read Lips +4, Search +5, Spot +9, Tumble +16, Use Magic Device +9. *Feats:* Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse (rapier).

Possessions: +2 shadow studded leather, +2 keen rapier, amulet of natural armor +3, wand of dispel magic (10 charges), *potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of ghoul touch, potion of jumping, potion of nondetection* (already consumed), masterwork shortbow with 30 arrows, pouch with 8 alexandrite gems (500 gp each), three worm-eaten roses to be left as calling cards.

Lord Chancellor Snigrot Ripbark, Male Human Rgr8/Shd5: CR 13; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 11 in. tall); HD 8d10+32 plus 4d8+16; hp 121; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22, touch 13, flat-footed 22 (increase AC by +4 when Lord Ripbark is *hasted*); Atk +16/+11/+6 melee (1d8+5 plus 1d6 cold/crit 19–20, +2 *longsword*), or +14/+9/+4 melee (1d8+5 plus 1d6 cold/crit 19–20, +2 longsword) and +14 melee (1d6+2/crit 19–20, +1 short sword), or +13/+8/+3 ranged (1d6/crit ×3, masterwork shortbow); SA favored enemies (1st—humans, 2nd—animals), two-weapon fighting ability; SQ hide in plain sight, evasion, darkvision, shadow illusion, summon shadow, shadow jump (20 ft.), defensive roll, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC, can't be flanked); AL LE; SV Fort +13, Ref +9, Will +9; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 9.

Skills: Craft (trapmaking) +8, Hide +15, Listen +12, Move Silently +15, Perform +4, Profession (bookkeeper) +4, Ride +6, Spot +12, Tumble +11, Wilderness Lore +9. *Feats:* Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Mobility, Spring Attack, Track.

Spells Prepared (2/1, base save DC = 12 + spell level): 1st—*read magic, resist elements;* 2nd—*detect good.*

Possessions: +3 chain shirt, adamantine buckler (worn only when Spring Attacking), *+2 frost longsword, +1 short sword, wand of cure serious wounds* (8 charges), *ring of protection +2, cloak of resistance +3, potion of bull's strength, potion of cat's grace, potion of fly, potion of nondetection* (already consumed), masterwork shortbow with 30 arrows, chancellor's chasuble of office, money belt with 10 pp and 7 aquamarines (500 gp each), the Infanta's jewels (5,000 gp jacinth tiara, 4,200 gp platinum and jacinth necklace, 2,800 gp gold and jacinth navel ring).

Tactics: The Worms are likely alerted to the PCs' presence by the shadows in area 2. In this case, they hide, observe the PCs, and then either parley or attack. If the PCs surprise the Worms in the Vertical Records, then all three thieves immediately attempt to hide, move away, and approach the PCs later.

If the PCs appear traitorous, larcenous, gullible, or surpassingly powerful, the Worms attempt to parley. In the latter two cases, Snigrot plays the victim while the other two Worms hide. Snigrot claims to have been forced to unlock the chest containing the Infanta's jewels. He claims to have been held against his will, perhaps as a hostage, by two thieves who have "only now disappeared, probably chased off by your clearly superior puissance," and he begs the PCs to help him exit and clear his name. In reality, he exits and finds a way to extract his fellows.

If the PCs appear likely to betray the kingdom, or if they appear to be thieves themselves, then Blake drinks his *potion of glibness* and offers to split the jewels with them in exchange for a way out past the Royal Halberdiers (Blake might also use his *fascinate* and *suggestion* abilities to aid the negotiations or to set up an ambush if they fail). If any parley attempt fails, Snigrot retreats while Coalfinger snipes with his shortbow from the shadows, hoping to gain a sneak attack on a spellcaster and interrupt a spell. Blake hits himself, Snigrot, and Coalfinger, in that order, with his *wand of haste.*

Samuel Blake: In combat—or before combat, if he has the time—Blake uses his *wand of haste* in the order given, and then he recites poetry to inspire greatness in Snigrot (this grants +2d10 temporary hit points, +2

on attack rolls, and +1 on Fortitude saves on the Lord Chancellor). He attempts to end every round by hiding in plain sight.

After using his *wand of haste* and inspiring greatness, Blake takes a command-and-support role in combat. The Worms are acutely aware that if they stand toe-to-toe with fighter-types, they will be slaughtered. They adopt a hit-and-run approach, attacking and then hiding, fighting throughout the building, using their Spring Attack feats to maximum advantage. Any surviving shadows or shadow servants are directed to concentrate their attacks on the same foe (see below) that Coalfinger and Snigrot are attacking.

If the Worms are being hurt by magic, Blake readies actions with his *wand of dispel magic* to counterspell enemy spellcasters. If melee attacks are taking a toll on the Worms, Blake uses *suggestion* or even *charm person* on a fighter who appears to have a low Will save. *Ventriloquism* is cast to distract the enemy. Blake throws up a *mirror image* if an enemy engages him. If a foe appears to be tottering on the brink of death, Blake uses his shortbow to push the character over the edge.

Coalfinger: Coalfinger is a classic guerrilla fighter, springing from the shadows, attacking, and then retreating to the shadows once more. With the *haste* spell on him and his Spring Attack feat, he moves, sneak attacks with his rapier, continues moving, and hides. He prefers to strike at wizards, sorcerers, or clerics, focusing his attacks with Snigrot while Blake uses *dispel magic* to lower the spellcaster's defenses.

If Coalfinger has time, he drinks his *potion of jumping* so that he can leap down from the catwalks in the Vertical Records, attack, and then leap back up out of reach. He might also try this tactic if the fight moves to the balcony overlooking the Teller's Hall.

Snigrot Ripbark: Before combat, or if he must, in the first round of combat, Snigrot consumes his *potion of fly*. If he has time, he consumes his other two potions. Then he uses his Spring Attack feat combined with the *haste* from Blake's wand to move, attack with his sword, continue moving, and heal with his wand. He attacks arcane spellcasters first, teaming up with Coalfinger to try to bring down one foe quickly. He always seeks to end his movement out of the range of enemy melee fighters. He attempts to avoid damage, but he makes himself something of a target for two reasons: one, he can absorb more blows than his fellow thieves, and two, he attempts to draw the PCs attacking him into the Embassies where they are attacked by the clay golem (the golem does not attack the Worms as they wear the Chancellor's crest). If Snigrot sees a weak opponent on the verge of death, he uses the full attack option to finish that opponent. Otherwise, he shuns the full attack option and performs hit-and-run strikes.

In dire circumstances, the Worms use their shadowjump ability to leap to another room and heal themselves with potions or Snigrot's wand. They then hide in the shadows and attempt to ambush the PCs again.

Trap (EL 1): The Rose Worms have constructed a makeshift net trap here out of rope and palette bindings.

Large Net Trap: CR 1; +5 melee (see note); Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 25).

Note: Characters in 10-ft. square are grappled by net (Str 15) if they fail a Reflex save (DC 14).

CONCLUSION

If the heroes defeat the Worms, they can exit and tell the Reticulated Castellan that it is safe to enter and retrieve the thieves. Shortly thereafter, the heroes receive the Electrum Etoile, the kingdom's highest civilian honor, in addition to their other promised rewards. If the PCs rescued Lucky Badenbot, he offers to become their financial advisor (which translates into a 1d10% discount on all financial dealings within the Kingdom) for standard hireling rates (see the DUNGEON MASTER's *Guide*, page 149).

If the PCs fall for Snigrot's deception, then in a matter of days the Rose Worms make it known that they escaped with the jewels after all. The PCs' names are sullied, and they suffer a –2 penalty on Diplomacy checks in the Kingdom for the following year.

If the PCs are defeated in combat by the Rose Worms, then the thieves attempt to use the PCs as hostages to negotiate an escape. If the situation is not resolved in another day, the Reticulated Castellan searches for and sends in another rescue party.

In any case, the heroes have come to the attention of both the Court and the Rose Worms. Surviving Worms might wish revenge on the PCs, as might other members of the gang, or the Infanta might need an escort back to her southern lands. Ω

This adventure was in part inspired by the Dialogue Concerning the Exchequer, *a 12th-century English treatise I came across when one of my students was working on a history project. You can read more about this literary treasure online at http://www.medievalhistory.net/excheq1.htm.*

CRITICAL THREATS

BY CHRISTOPHER PERKINS
ARTWORK BY JASON A. ENGLE

LARNYTH

Larnyth haunts the Underdark, claiming the entire subterranean realm as his personal demesne. He strives to eradicate all life from its depths. The svirfneblin vampire has no permanent lair; instead he wanders the labyrinthine depths with a stone golem hollowed out to contain his coffin and treasure. Larnyth adores gems but values little else. After slaying his foes, he likes to arrange their corpses in macabre dioramas, leaving behind their assorted possessions and magic items as grim decorations after destroying those items that actually pose a threat to him.

APPEARANCE

Larnyth is bald and has a gnarled, wiry physique. Black veins protrude from the vampire's taut, alabaster-white flesh, and his eyes resemble black, sunken pits.

LARNYTH'S STONE GOLEM

Larnyth's stone golem is shaped like a 9-foot-long stag beetle. The beetle gets one attack with its mandibles (2d10+13 points of damage) and moves at a slightly greater speed (30 feet), but otherwise the beetle has typical stone golem statistics (see pages 108–110 of the *Monster Manual*). The beetle's folded, hinged wings conceal a 4-foot-long, 3-foot-wide compartment that serves as Larnyth's coffin. The hinges are carefully hidden and require a Search check (DC 33) to notice. The lid is bolted from within (Open Lock DC 36) and *arcane locked* as well. Tiny holes allow the vampire to enter and leave his coffin in *gaseous form*.

A *forbiddance* spell protects the inside of Larnyth's coffin. The "bed" is filled with scores of precious gems worth a total of 33,000 gp. Atop the gems sits a *darkskull* that radiates a 90-foot-radius *unhallow* spell. The gnome's spellbook is hidden under the bed of gems. The first living creature that touches the spellbook triggers a *horrid wilting* spell (cast at 17th level and affecting all living creatures within 30 feet) placed on a 1,000-gp black gemstone set into the book's cover.

Male Svirfneblin Vampire Wiz17: CR 19; Small Undead (3 ft. 5 in. tall); HD 17d12; hp 129; Init +9; Spd 20 ft.; AC 33, touch 20, flat-footed 28; Atk +10/+5 melee (1d4+2 plus energy drain, slam) or +13/+8 ranged; SA domination (Will save, DC 21, negates), energy drain, children of the night (dire rats and bats only), create spawn, spell-like abilities; SQ undead, +4 turn resistance, DR 15/+1, cold and electricity resistance 20, *gaseous form*, *spider climb*, alternate form, fast healing 5, darkvision (120 feet), low-light vision, stonecunning, *nondetection* (continuous; DC 32 to negate); SR 28; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +14, Will +14; Str 14, Dex 21, Con 13, Int 22, Wis 15, Cha 16.

Skills: Bluff +16*, Concentration +21, Craft (bookbinding) +16, Craft (stonemasonry) +26, Hide +22*, Knowledge (arcana) +26, Listen +17*, Move Silently +18*, Search +19*, Sense Motive +15*, Spellcraft +26, Spot +17*. *Feats:* Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Craft Staff, Craft Wondrous Item, Dodge, Improved Familiar (Small earth elemental**), Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Maximize Spell, Mobility, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Spell Penetration, Spring Attack, Still Spell.

*Includes +8 racial bonus for being a vampire.

**See pages 17 and 40 of *Tome and Blood*.

Spell-like Abilities: 1/day—*blindness*, *blur*, *change self*. Caster level 17th; base save DC = 13 + spell level.

Spells: See **Tactics** for recommended spells. The save DC against Larnyth's offensive spells is 16 + spell level.

Languages: Aquan, Common, Drow, Dwarven, Gnome, Goblin, Ignan, Kuo-toa, Terran, Undercommon.

Possessions: +7 bracers of armor, *darkskull*, *staff of frost* (19 charges), spellbook, beetle-shaped stone golem.

TACTICS

Larnyth uses his Small earth elemental familiar for reconnaissance. The earth elemental stays about 1 mile ahead of the vampire and blends with the surrounding stonework to avoid detection. When it spots interlopers, it alerts its master.

Unless he is recuperating inside his coffin, Larnyth rides atop his stone golem (sitting behind its head) and uses a *permanent image* spell to make himself and the golem appear as a friendly gnome merchant astride a giant pack lizard laden with foodstuffs (mostly edible fungi). Some of his favorite combat tactics include the following:

- Using the *wall of ice* function of his *staff of frost* to cut off an enemy's escape route.
- Casting *maze* on an enemy cleric or *forcecage* on an enemy barbarian, fighter, monk, paladin, ranger, or rogue. Neither spell grants a saving throw, and spell resistance does not apply.
- Using maximized *magic missiles* to disrupt an enemy's spellcasting.
- Using *transmute mud to rock* to fully heal his golem. Ω

SPIRAL OF MANZESSINE

BY DAVID NOONAN

ARTWORK BY WAYNE REYNOLDS AND JONATHAN WAYSHAK

CARTOGRAPHY BY KYLE HUNTER

Magic Items · Monsters · NPCs · Objects · Settlements · Traps

And it bears the fruit of Deceit,
Ruddy and sweet to eat;
And the Raven his nest has made
In its thickest shade.

The Gods of the earth and sea,
Sought thro' Nature to find this Tree
But their search was all in vain:
There grows one in the Human Brain.

—*William Blake, "The Human Abstract"*

"Spiral of Manzessine" places a sizable obstacle in front of the characters: several million tons of solid rock. Unable to continue their planned journey through the Underdark, the characters must detour through a series of caverns that mind flayers use as a prison for criminals too valuable to kill but too dangerous to live free. The presence of outsiders sets off a massive prison riot and escape, and the characters find themselves surrounded by desperate mind-flayers—many of whom haven't had a fresh meal in years.

"Spiral of Manzessine" is suitable for four 11th-level player characters. Characters who survive will advance to 12th level near the adventure's conclusion. Adjust the adventure as you see fit if you wish to play it with a larger, smaller, higher-level, or lower-level group. See the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar for details.

This adventure is also specifically designed to fit in the middle of part 2 of the *City of the Spider Queen* adventure, especially if the characters had a difficult time with part 1 and had to undergo multiple *raise deads* or *resurrections*.

PREPARATION

You, the Dungeon Master (DM), need a copy of the *Player's Handbook*, the DUNGEON MASTER's *Guide*, and the *Monster Manual* to use this adventure. "Spiral of Manzessine" is designed to take place in the FORGOTTEN REALMS, but the FORGOTTEN REALMS *Campaign Setting* isn't required to use the adventure. If you are adventuring in the FORGOTTEN REALMS, the *City of the Spider Queen* adventure provides hours of further adventures in the Underdark as the characters battle drow, undead, and a malevolent evil that threatens to cover all of Faerûn.

Text that appears in shaded boxes is player information, which you can read aloud or paraphrased when appropriate. Unshaded boxes contain important information for you, including special instructions. Monster and NPC statistics are provided with each encounter wherever necessary.

"Spiral of Manzessine" is a site-based adventure, but as soon as the mind flayers raise a general alarm, many of the prisoners attempt to turn on their captors. Each encounter area lists which creatures are likely to be present before or after the prisoners try to escape. Adapt the encounter descriptions as you see fit, and don't be shy about moving creatures from room to room. Especially after the alarm, Manzessine Prison is a chaotic battlefield.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

About fifty years ago, a powerful mind flayer nation founded Manzessine prison, seeking a place where dangerous criminals and enemies of the mind-flayer

state could be kept safely out of harm's way. Mind flayer scouting parties found a suitable series of caverns in a little-traveled part of the Underdark. Intrigued by the deadly gas that seeped from fissures nearby, the mind flayers built the Manzessine stronghold, and one by one, mind flayer criminals arrived at the prison's gates in shackles. There the prisoners were tortured periodically if they had information their masters wanted—or if the torturers just needed the practice.

Eventually Manzessine became home to other enemies of the mind flayers, including a human sorcerer who betrayed an important mind flayer lord and the bugbear assassin cohort of a still-at-large mind flayer revolutionary. Several near-escapes led the Manzessine guards to erect a formidable series of magical traps and defenses to keep their prisoners in check. The flow of prisoners from mind flayer society slowed to a trickle about a decade ago, and the last prisoner arrived more than two years ago. Since then, the Manzessine guards started trading prison cell capacity with a nearby drow settlement. In exchange for the occasional delicacy (an unusual creature the drow have captured on the surface world), the mind flayers imprison and torture those who fall afoul of drow society. Even a dark-skinned drow might go pale when threatened with imprisonment among the mind flayers.

Several months ago, the drow settlement fell—apparently to infighting among the drow noble families, the mind flayers believe. Drow, bugbear, and goblin refugees have been wandering the caverns near Manzessine prison ever since, and the mind flayers have found all of them quite tasty. But last week, a massive cave-in blocked the main passageway between the drow settlement and a larger drow city several hundred miles away. The mind flayers have begun to clear the rubble, because that passageway is the only one wide enough for the quarterly resupply caravans to reach Manzessine prison.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The characters, moving along a vast underground highway through the Underdark, find the passage blocked by a massive cave-in. Amid the rubble, dozens of slaves are tunneling through to the other side under the watchful eye of mind flayers from nearby Manzessine prison, where the worst of mind flayer society is incarcerated.

The characters can't get beyond the cave-in, so they head toward Manzessine Prison, hoping it reconnects with the main passage at some point. Their presence is enough to put the prison on alert. As guards scurry to battle-stations, ready to protect the prison from the characters, the mind flayer prisoners inside seize on the distraction to attempt an escape. The character must not only contend with the mind flayer prison guards, an assortment of deadly magical traps, and the mindless automatons that handle the prisoners, but also the murderous dregs of mind flayer society, who are eager to lash out at anyone that stands between them and freedom.

CHARACTER HOOKS

If you're adding "Spiral of Manzessine" to part 2 of *City of the Spider Queen*, the drow settlement described above is Szith Morcane, and the larger drow city is Maerimydra. The refugees are the result of fighting between the Lolth loyalists in Szith Morcane and the Kieransalee-worshipping invaders. The characters are on their way to Maerimydra to stop the Great Revenance referred to in the letter to Dorina T'Sarran (probably found in area **S44** of Szith Morcane).

If you're using "Spiral of Manzessine" as a stand-alone adventure, the characters need only be traveling through the Underdark on some errand (or just exploring). Stymied by the cave-in, the characters take the obvious detour route through Manzessine prison. The characters might be scouting out a new trade route for a dwarven merchant family, chasing a duergar fugitive through the Underdark, or on the run themselves from a clutch of black dragons.

Because nearly anyone could be imprisoned in Manzessine Prison, it's easy to build an adventure out of an effort to free a particular prisoner. If an important NPC was recently captured by mind flayers or drow in your ongoing campaign, you can run "Spiral of Manzessine" as a rescue adventure with little modification.

One unusual way to introduce "Spiral of Manzessine" in your campaign, whether you're playing *City of the Spider Queen* or not, is to send the characters to the gates of Manzessine Prison if they get a "similar area" result while *teleporting* through the Underdark, In *City of the Spider Queen* particularly, there's a good chance that characters try long-distance *teleports* despite the risks described for *faerzress* in the "Magic and the Underdark" section below.

Finally, one of the most satisfying adventures in D&D is the old-fashioned prison break scenario. Deprived of their weapons and equipment, characters will find getting out of Manzessine prison a tough task indeed. If you want to adapt "Spiral of Manzessine" as a prison break scenario, either tone down the opposition significantly or run it for 14th-level characters. The characters start with no equipment, but they undoubtedly reequip themselves as the adventure progresses. You'll want to make some accommodation in a prison break scenario for wizard PCs; it's no fun to spend a whole adventure as a wizard without a spellbook.

MAGIC AND THE UNDERDARK

Why not just *teleport* beyond the cave-in?

The Underdark of Faerûn is suffused with a magical radiation that the drow call *faerzress*. A remnant of the mighty forces that shaped the terrain of the Underdark, faerzress distorts and interferes with certain types of magic. In the context of this adventure, faerzress has the following effects:

- Scry checks made for *scrying* on a target located within the Underdark (as opposed to checks made to detect magical sensors) suffer a –4 penalty because of the interference of faerzress on Divination magic.
- Transmutation [teleportation] spells and effects such as *teleport*, *word of recall*, *refuge*, and even *teleport without error* do not work reliably over distances more than one mile when either the origin or the destination is within the Underdark. A character who casts the *teleport* spell or uses an ability that duplicates the spell must make a Spellcraft check against a DC of 35. If the check is successful, the spell works properly. If it fails, the *teleporting* character automatically suffers a mishap, just as if he had rolled 100 on the table in the *teleport* spell description, followed by an off-target result.

A character using a normally infallible form of the teleportation magic (such as *word of recall* or *teleport without error*) must make a Spellcraft check against a DC of 25. If the check is successful, the spell works properly. If it fails, the character suffers a mishap and an off-target result as described above.

The effects of faerzress on spells is not widely known among surface-dwelling characters. Before a character attempts a spell that would be affected by the Underdark's magical conditions, you should allow the caster a Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 25). If the check is successful, the spell works properly. If it fails, the character suffers a mishap and an off-target result as described above.

THE CAVE-IN (EL 12)

In general, traveling through the Underdark isn't much different than moving around a dungeon. At any given time, there is a 50% chance that the party is passing through a cavern and a 50% chance that the party is following a tunnel. The typical cavern is 70 to 160 feet long (1d10+6 × 10) and 20 to 50 (1d4+1 × 10 feet wide. The typical tunnel is 100 to 1,000 feet long (1d10 × 100) and 5 to 20 feet wide (5d4). Streams and lakes are very common, and at infrequent occasions travelers must wade icy cold water for hundreds of feet at a stretch.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Spiral of Manzessine" is intended for four 11th-level characters, but it can be modified for parties of different sizes or levels. Many of the antagonists are creatures with classes, so the easiest way to adjust the overall difficulty of the adventure is to increase or decrease their levels. Consider adapting the adventure as follows:

9th- and 10th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written,but with the following additional changes:

- Many of the encounters as written are difficult, but not out of the question, for a group of this level. You might try adjusting the time frame of the adventure a bit to allow the PCs time to rest, heal, and replenish lost spells. It's quite feasible that the situation in the prison reaches a stand-off point that lasts for some time as the two sides skirmish back and forth.
- Reduce all classed NPCs by one or two class levels.
- Provide the PCs with some expendable healing magic in the form of found cure wounds potions, scrolls, or wands.
- Reduce the number of mind flayers at the cave-in to three.
- Make the cryohydra in area **6** an 8-headed hydra.
- Reduce the number of flesh golems in area **3** and **7** by one.
- Reduce the number of mind flayers in area **4** by four.

12th- and 13th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written, but with the following additional changes:

- Many of the encounters as written are too easy for a group of this level. One way to make the adventure more challenging is to add a sense of urgency to the adventure. Perhaps the PCs learn that a group of mind flayer reinforcements are on their way to the prison and will arrive in less than an hour or so. Perhaps the reinforcements consist of a group of drow fighters from a nearby settlement, come to interrogate one of the prisoners the mind flayers have been holding. Alternatively, more of the prisoners and guards might have escaped death, allowing you to increase the number of foes in some areas.
- Increase all classed NPCs by one or two class levels.
- Increase the number of mind flayers at the cave-in to six.
- Make the cryohydra in area **6** a 12-headed cryohydra.
- Increase the number of flesh golems in areas **3** and **7** by two.
- Increase the number of mind flayers in area **4** by four.

14th- and 15th-level PCs: Run the adventure with the changes described above (for 12th- and 13th-level PCs). In addition, make the following changes:

- Increase all classed NPCs by three or four levels.
- Add a mind flayer handler, in the process of feeding the beast, to area **6**.
- Replace roughly half the flesh golems with stone golems.
- The summoning trap in area **15** summons a pit fiend instead of a gelugon.
- Change the stone golem in area **19** to an iron golem.

Remember that changing the Encounter Levels should change the amount of treasure in the adventure. Consult page 170 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (**Tables 7-2**, **7-3**, and **7-4**) to determine treasure appropriate to the new encounters.

Walls: Walls, for the most part, are unworked stone.

Unworked Stone Walls: At least 5 feet thick, hardness 8; hp 900 (per 5 feet of thickness); AC 3; break DC 65; Climb DC 20.

Floors: Floors in the Underdark are natural stone. Running and charging are impossible on these surfaces. Small stalagmites are common.

Ceilings: Ceilings in the Underdark are natural unworked stone and range from 15 to 20 feet high. Stalactites are common.

Around the corner, a massive cave-in of rock and dirt has completely blocked the main passageway. In the center of the dead end is a 10-foot wide tunnel. Duergar, drow, and hobgoblins in rags emerge from the tunnel, pushing carts full of rock and dirt. At the entrance to the smaller tunnel are two mind flayers in black robes, observing the workers with their arms crossed. Piles of timbers, rubble, and massive rib-bones 5 feet long sit to either side of the smaller tunnel.

A 15-foot wide side passage continues to the east. In front of it sit two wagons with giant lizards harnessed to them.

A chain-reaction series of collapses due to seismic activity have utterly obliterated the passageway through the Underdark for over a mile. The slaves of the mind-flayers have only recently started digging, so the tunnel into the rock peters out after a hundred feet or so. The timbers are used to shore up the roof of the tunnel. Because wood is scarce in the Underdark, the mind flayers use the larger bones of creatures such as hydras for building materials.

Creatures: Four mind flayers are present: two at the tunnel entrance and two more overseeing the digging at the end of the tunnel. Fifteen hobgoblins, 7 duergar, and 4 drow comprise the digging team. They're effectively unarmed; their shovels deal 1d4 points of bludgeoning damage, but the diggers are not proficient in their use (–4 penalty on attacks). In any case, they probably won't attack the characters.

Mind Flayers (4): hp 44, 42, 41, 51; *Monster Manual* 136.

Duergar Com1 (7): hp 5, 3, 6, 6, 5, 7, 2; *Monster Manual* 81.

Hobgoblins (15): hp 5, 8, 5, 4, 6, 6, 5, 8, 3, 3, 5, 4, 6, 5, 4; *Monster Manual* 119.

Drow Com1 (4): hp 2, 3, 4, 3; *Monster Manual* 86.

Pack Lizards (4): hp 81, 78; see Appendix.

Tactics: The mind flayers overseeing the tunnelers have already captured a few stragglers from the drow settlement and added them to the chain gang. Until the characters use powerful magic or otherwise demonstrate that they're a serious threat, the mind flayers use *charm monster* and *suggestion* to convince the characters to pick up a shovel and start digging. In any case, these mind flayers would rather have slaves than meals, so they use their *mind blast* spell-like ability rather than trying to eat a foe's brain. They scurry from rock-pile to rock pile, poking their squidlike heads up long enough to use *mind blast* or *suggestion* on intruders. If pressed in melee combat, however, they make tentacle attacks with relish.

At the first sign of trouble, the second pair of mind flayers telepathically direct the diggers to run pell-mell down the corridor (hopefully drawing attacks from the PCs). Then the mind flayers themselves follow. The mind flayers also direct the drow to use their *faerie fire* and *darkness* abilities when appropriate, and they order the duergar to turn themselves invisible and attempt to grapple a spellcaster. Other than that, the digging team scatters randomly into the larger cavern, then cowers in fear, oblivious to the battle around them.

If three mind flayers fall in combat, the fourth use *plane shift* and retreats to the Astral Plane. It waits there for a few hours, then *plane shifts* again and begins what is probably a long walk back to Manzessine Prison.

The tunnelers have been *charmed* so thoroughly that they are nearly incapable of independent thought. Once they're out of the tunnel, they cower in place

CONNECTING TO CITY OF THE SPIDER QUEEN

In *City of the Spider Queen*, the cave-in is about fifteen miles southeast of Szith Morcane—about halfway between the drow settlement and the Lake of Shadows, just a few miles short of the major fork shown on the map. A secondary canyon, not shown on the player's handout, winds down and east from there, terminating at the gates of Manzessine Prison.

If you like, you can provide foreshadowing for "Spiral of Manzessine" while the characters are still in Szith Morcane. The mind flayer in area **S12** (the Szith Morcane bazaar) could be from Manzessine Prison, in Szith Morcane to negotiate a trading agreement similar to the one the mind flayers had with the Lolth-worshipping predecessors in Szith Morcane. If captured and interrogated, they might reveal the existence of Manzessine Prison.

Later in the adventure, the characters might encounter the hermit mind flayer Quthnorak in area **V5** of Vournoth's Mire. Quthnorak undoubtedly knows about Manzessine Prison. Perhaps he travels there once a year for certain dark religious rites Or maybe he served a sentence in Manzessine Prison, then chose the life of a hermit upon his release, knowing he'd be unwelcome in mind flayer society.

and refuse to fight, wailing terribly if their masters are slain. Their attitude is hostile to the PCs, and even if liberated they stay put rather than flee. If the characters can improve their attitude to indifferent, the tunnelers flee back toward Szith Morcane.

Unless the giant lizards actually take damage, they stay where they are, blithely ignoring the combat around them.

Development: The characters might try to get past the cave-in at this point, ignoring the passageway to Manzessine Prison. Let them try, but even with magic, it'll be a tough task. *Dimension door* lacks the range to get through a mile of solid rock, and *teleport* is a dangerous, uncertain solution because of the faerzress effect described above. Most plans for magically bypassing the cave-in fail for a more subtle reason, however: It's hard to know exactly where the passageway resumes a mile away, and it's difficult to navigate with precision through solid stone. The biggest barrier to *teleport* isn't the faerzress; it's the difficulty in getting a description of the destination.

Characters who try to dig their way through the cave-in probably make faster progress than the mind flayer thralls, but they probably get discouraged and give up eventually. *Disintegrate* only digs out 10 feet of corridor, and it definitely needs shoring up if the characters want a safe passage to travel down. *Passwall* works a little better, digging faster and making more stable tunnels. Still, an 11th-level arcane spellcaster needs to cast hundreds of *passwalls* to get all the way through the cave-in—probably an impossible task, given that *passwall* only lasts for 1 hour per level.

Polymorphing the whole group into burrowing creatures such as umber hulks is an effective solution, but keep in mind that not every burrowing creature can burrow through rock (umber hulks can). Simply having one character burrow ahead of the group won't work, because the tunnel collapses right behind the burrower. Navigating remains a problem, too.

Other spells might prove more useful, but none is a guarantee. *Ethereal jaunt* targets only the caster, and its duration is too short to travel all the way to where the passageway resumes. *Etherealness* might work if the characters are unusually fast and travel unerringly in a straight line through the cave-in. If they're even slightly off-course or travel slowly, they won't make it through the cave-in in time.

The *shadow walk* spell is probably beyond the powers of a PC wizard, but an arcane spellcaster with a *shadow walk* scroll might be able to bypass the cave-in. Again, navigation through the solid rock is a significant hurdle.

As an aid to navigation, *find the path* is probably the most effective Divination spell. If the characters are on the Material Plane, find the path directs them to Manzessine Prison. Then the spell leads the characters straight though the spiral-shaped prison, warning the spell recipient of traps (but not creatures). On the Ethereal Plane or Plane of Shadow, *find the path* can direct the spell's recipient right to the point where the main passageway resumes.

Other Divination spells are less useful. *Clairaudience/clairvoyance* can't find the other side of the cave-in because it's not a known or obvious locale. *Scrying* works on people, not locations. *Contact other plane, divination,* and *commune* won't provide specific enough information to navigate beyond the barrier, although they might tell the characters just how massive the cave-in is.

Ad-Hoc XP Adjustment: Because the thralls are unarmed and mostly noncombatants, they aren't a challenge. Characters only earn experience for overcoming the mind flayers.

1. BRIDGE OF FUMES (EL VARIABLE)

After an uneventful two-mile journey from the cave-in site (through typical Underdark caverns described above), the characters arrive at Manzessine Prison. To gain entry, they must cross the bridge and deal with its guards.

Between two massive stalagmites is a natural stone bridge that crosses a chasm, ending at an iron portcullis. To either side of the portcullis are hollowed-out stalactites ending 10 feet from the ledge. Two strange, patchwork-skin mockeries of giant mind flayers stand on the ledge. The bottom of the chasm can't be seen—not because it's necessarily deep, but because it's full of a green, glowing gas. Wisps of the sulphurous gas extend to about 5 feet below the bridge.

One of the stalactites contains Xalliordel, the mind flayer sentry responsible for keeping intruders out of Manzessine Prison. If a telepathic warning to intruders doesn't work, he orders the flesh golems to attack and sound the alarm.

The gas glows with a soft green neonlike effect equivalent to the light of a full moon on the surface.

Three other features exist in this area, although the characters are unlikely to notice them. Near the bottom of the chasm—100 feet down—is the natural vent through which the green gas seeps. There's also a valve mechanism controlled by the levers in area **23**. And along the south edge of the wall, at about bridge height, is a small viewport that allows a character in area **23** to watch the bridge and the gas. A successful Spot check (DC 30) allows a character to notice the viewport.

Trap (EL 8): The green gas is poisonous oorga gas, strong enough to kill many victims within a minute. It's safe to walk on the bridge and the ledge, but any character who flies below the bridge or falls off it is subject to the poison every round he inhales the gas.

The oorga gas doesn't affect the flesh golems, of course. But the golems and Xalliordel watch the wisps of oorga gas very carefully. There's almost no air movement in the cavern normally, so if the wisps move, the guards know something is moving invisibly through the cavern. Characters who walk on the bridge or fly 10 feet above it disturb the gas unless they are themselves incorporeal, gaseous, or ethereal.

Oorga Gas: CR 8; Inhaled; Fortitude save (DC 18) resists; 1d6 Con/2d6 Con.

Creatures (EL 12): Two flesh golems, made mostly from drow and mind flayer parts, guard the gate at all times. When the characters arrive, a 3rd-level mind flayer cleric named Xalliordel is on duty in the north stalactite.

The characters can't see them right away, but a shrieker grows on the east exterior of each stalactite.

Xalliordel, Male Mind Flayer Clr3: CR 11; Medium-size Aberration; 8d8+16 (mind flayer) plus 3d8+6 (Clr); hp 73; Init +7; Spd 20 ft.; AC 23, touch 13, flat-footed 20; Atk +11 (1d4, 4 tentacles); SA *mind blast*, *psionics*, improved grab, extract; SQ telepathy; SR 25; AL LE; Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +14; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 18, Wis 21, Cha 20.

Skills: Concentration +13, Hide +9, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (religion) +9, Knowledge (Underdark) +9, Listen +16, Move Silently +8, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +14, Spot +16. *Feats:* Alertness, Combat Casting, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Weapon Finesse (tentacle).

Extract (Ex): If Xalliordel begins a turn with all four tentacles attached, and maintains his hold, he extracts the brain, killing the victim.

Improved Grab (Ex): Xalliordel must hit a Small to Large creature with a tentacle. If he hits, he gets a free grapple check to establish a hold. If successful, he can attach the remaining tentacles with another successful grapple check. If the foe is trying to escape, the mind flayer gets a +2 circumstance bonus for every tentacle attached at the beginning of the turn.

Mind Blast (Sp): 60-ft. cone; Will save (DC 19) or be stunned for 3d4 rounds.

Psionics (Sp): At will—*astral projection, charm monster, detect thoughts, levitate, plane shift, suggestion.* Caster level 8th; save DC 15 + spell level.

Telepathy (Su): Xalliordel can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 ft. that has a language.

Spells Prepared (4/5/3; base save DC = 15 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds, detect magic* ×2, *guidance*; 1st—*detect good, detect chaos, entropic shield, protection from good**, *shield of faith*; 2nd—*calm emotions**, *hold person, zone of truth.*

*Domain spell. *Domains:* Evil (+1 caster level for evil spells), Law (+1 caster level for lawful spells).

Possessions: +2 breastplate, wand of silence (46 charges), *potion of cure moderate wounds*, scroll of *invisibility purge.*

Flesh Golems (2): hp 51, 48; *Monster Manual* 108.

Shriekers (2): hp 10, 9; *Monster Manual* 93.

Tactics: As soon as Xalliordel suspects the existence of intruders, he says (telepathically if the intruder is visible, in Undercommon if the intruder can't be seen), "Come no further. State your business clearly and completely, or go immediately whence you came. We eat visitors."

The characters might attempt to talk their way past the guard by making threats, employing a ruse, or relying on the mind flayers' good nature (unlikely). Xalliordel banters with the characters so long as they

PRISON BREAK

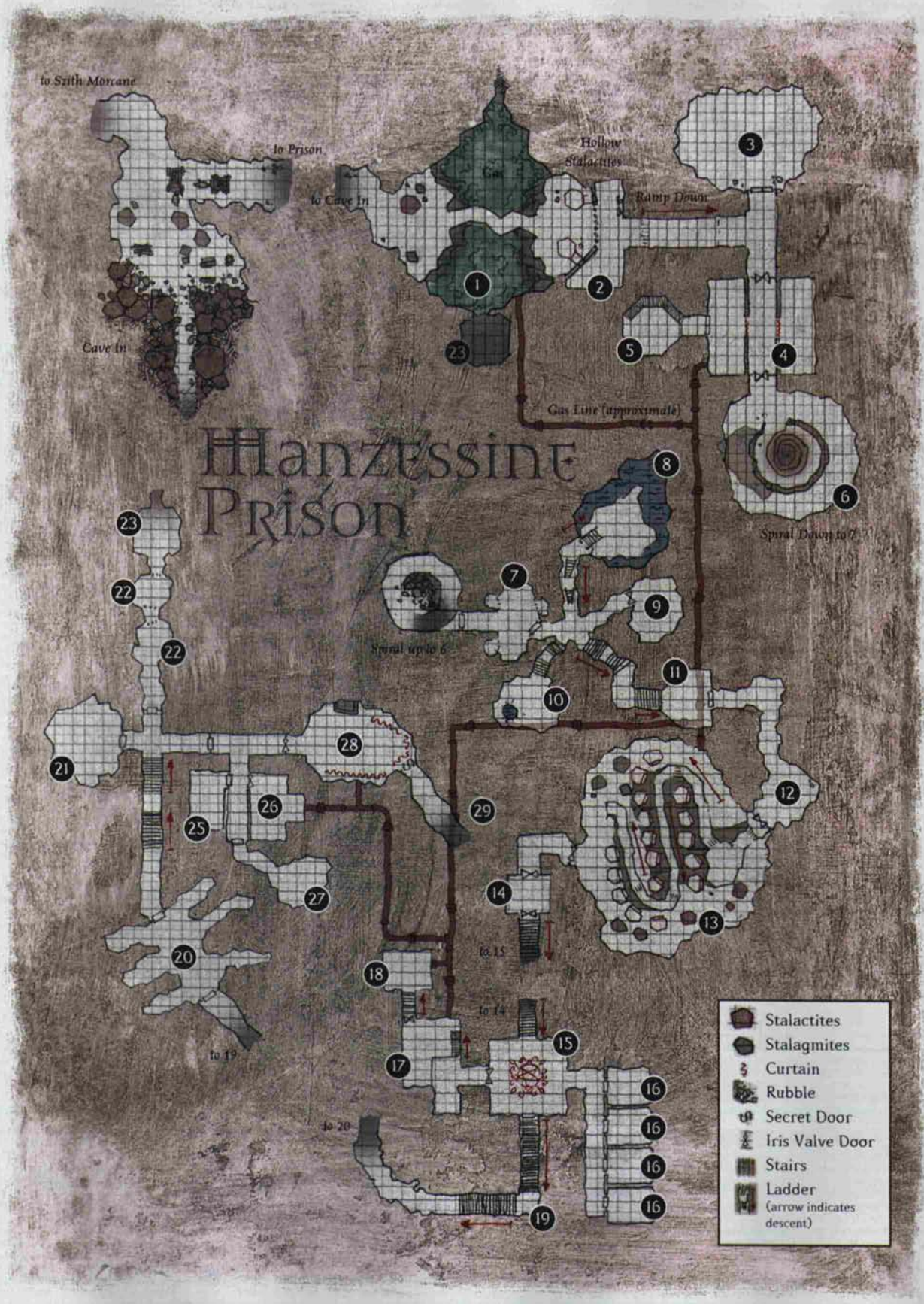
Once the shriekers start screaming, Manzessine Prison goes on alert. Once they see guards scurrying about, twelve of the prisoners launch their escape attempt.

All the prisoners have the *tattoo of dimensional anchor*, so the mind flayers among them can't use their *astral projection* or *plane shift* abilities. They're also confined to their cells at all times, unless they're on their way to or from the torture chamber. Finally, *sigils of static* carved into each prison cell prevent the prisoners from communicating with each other, and spellcasters have *sigils of suppression* on their cells as well

But by leaving messages for each other in one of the echo stones in the torture chamber, the prisoners slowly formed a conspiracy, then an escape plan. Albossk, the mind flayer cleric, uses his Escape Artist skill to squeeze far enough out of the bars to get a *dispel magic* off. Albossk dispels the *sigils of suppression* on Dyema's cell, then Dyema begins using *telekinesis* to manipulate the locks to free the conspirators.

In less than a minute, they're all out of their cells, but the Manzessine prison guards discover the escapees. A battle ensues, with the escapees heading both downward and upward. In both cases, the escape attempts stall when the prisoners meet more serious opposition (in areas **7–10** and area **19**). But the escapees are probably still on the loose when the characters arrive on the scene.

The escape happens quickly, so it's unlikely that the PCs see it happen. But they see its aftermath, and they probably stumble onto one or both of the standoffs that have developed between the escapees and their former captors.


to Szith Morcane
to Prison
Cave In
Gas
Hollow Stalactites
to Cave In
Ramp Down
Gas Line (approximate)
Spiral Down to 7
Spiral up to 6
to 15
to 14
to 19
to 20
Manzessine Prison
Stalactites
Stalagmites
Curtain
Rubble
Secret Door
Iris Valve Door
Stairs
Ladder
(arrow indicates descent)

don't try to cross the chasm or obviously set up an attack. Once the characters have spoken to him for a bit, have them attempt the relevant opposed check (Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate) against Xalliordel's Sense Motive check. The best the characters can realistically hope for is a delay while Xalliordel sends a hobgoblin slave to get Lugrihoomius in area **12**. If Xalliordel wins the check, he simply says, "Retreat now or be slain." Combat starts the following round.

Needless to say, Manzessine Prison doesn't get many visitors, much less unannounced drop-ins.

In a fight, Xalliordel stays in his stalactite (where he has three-quarters cover), first disturbing the shriekers to put the prison on alert, then using *mind blast* to stun as many characters as possible. He also has a scroll of *invisibility purge* to take care of unseen foes. The flesh golems engage in melee, trying to perform coup de graces on stunned characters and making bull rush attacks to send characters down the chasm. Because they're constructs, the golems are unaffected by Xalliordel's *mind blast*.

Development: If the characters defeat Xalliordel and the flesh golems, they have a few more obstacles to deal with. The shriekers scream their warning if Xalliordel disturbs them, or if characters pass within 10 feet of the stalactites. Once the guards scramble, the prisoners make their move (see the "Prison Break" sidebar).

A lever-and-wheel mechanism 15 feet inside Manzessine Prison raises and lowers the portcullis. Xalliordel's routine for accepting real visitors is to use his *wand of silence* to quiet the shriekers, then climb down to raise the portcullis and let the guests in.

Portcullis: 2 in. thick; hardness 10; hp 60; lift DC 25, break DC 28.

Ad-Hoc XP Adjustment: Characters only get experience for overcoming the oorga gas if they take damage from the poison or figure out the valve controls in area **23**, below. Merely walking across the bridge isn't enough.

INSIDE MANZESSINE PRISON

Once inside Manzessine Prison, characters have to contend both with chambers hewn from stone and natural caverns; the mind flayers took advantage of many natural caverns when they built the prison centuries ago.

Walls: Walls in the natural caverns are unworked stone. Finished chambers have a layer of masonry covering the hewn stone.

Unworked Stone Walls: At least 5 feet thick; hardness 8; hp 900 (per 5 feet of thickness); AC 3; break DC 65; Climb DC 20.

Masonry Walls: 1 ft. thick; hardness 8; hp 90; AC 3; break DC 35; Climb DC 15.

Floors: Unworked floors are natural stone, so running and charging are impossible. In the finished chambers, smooth stone floors present no obstacles to movement.

Ceilings: Ceilings in the natural caverns are unworked stone and range from 10 feet high near the walls to peaks of 20 to 30 feet. Finished ceilings are hewn stone, and larger chambers have buttresses to prevent cave-ins.

Doors: Inside Manzessine Prison are two kinds of doors: airtight steel iris-valve doors (with inset levers that open and close them) and strong wooden doors. The doors all have good (Open Lock DC 30) locks and are typically kept locked—this is a prison, after all.

Iris-Valve Doors: 2 in. thick; hardness 10; hp 60; break DC 28.

Strong Wooden Doors: 2 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 20; break DC 25.

Light: Sconces of *continual flame* illuminate all passageways and chambers of worked stone. Faintly luminescent fungus grows on many of the walls and ceilings of the natural caverns, providing light equivalent to that of the full moon on the surface.

Air: The air inside Manzessine Prison tends to be stale and still. Small chimneys (not shown on the map) connect the prison to other Underdark caverns, and eventually to the surface. But rooms that have iris-valve doors have no chimneys, because then they wouldn't be air-tight.

Vents: Airtight rooms also have small, 4-inch vents, usually near the floor. They connect with the oorga gas system controlled from the valve room (area **23**). The map indicates the path of gas if someone reaches the valve control room and opens the valves.

GOLEM ORDERS

Manzessine Prison has a lot of golems guarding it. Most are instructed to ignore anyone who makes the correct gesture: bowing at the waist with arms crossed and hands touching shoulders. Anyone else gets attacked.

The prisoners see this happen all the time as they're led to their torture sessions, and when they get free, they try making the gesture. But it doesn't work. The golems have orders that for 2 hours after the alarm goes off, they respond to a different gesture: arms overhead and crossed at the wrists.

2. PRISON ENTRYWAY

Beyond the portcullis is a chamber of worked stone with a ramp leading downward and to the east. Frescoes cover the walls, depicting various Underdark races (mostly mind flayers, but also drow, duergar, and others) drowning in a sea of purple and tentacles. A wheel and lever mechanism is embedded in the wall. Along the west wall are two small doorways about 20 feet high.

The doorways lead into the hollow stalactites in area 1. (The mind flayers can all *levitate*, so they typically dispense with ladders.) The wheel raises and lowers the portcullis, and the lever locks it in position.

Development: Once the alarm goes off, four flesh golems are supposed to guard the entryway and repulse any intruders. But the mind flayers have erred, locking the golems in the storage cave (area 3).

3. STORAGE CAVE (EL 11)

If the alarm has been sounded, read the following:

Behind the two wooden doors, you can hear dull thumping and pounding at irregular but frequent intervals.

The sound is the four flesh golems inside, trying to get out. A successful Listen check (DC 20) reveals the sound of shuffles and footsteps and indicates that the pounding sounds like flesh on wood.

Once the characters open the doors, read them the following (you might want to complete the combat first):

This cave is full of crates and barrels, all clearly marked in Undercommon: rope, extra shackles, glassware, brain jerky, and so on. Two wagons—one with a broken axle—sit just inside the door, and animal droppings are scattered across the floor.

The animal droppings are from the pack lizards encountered near the cave-in.

Creatures: Four flesh golems are stored here as a reserve in case the existing ones are destroyed or go berserk. They have orders to seize and hold the entryway (area 1), but the door is locked and they don't know how to open it. They pound fruitlessly at the door until someone lets them out or for 2 hours. If the characters open the door, they immediately attack.

If the alarm hasn't sounded yet, they emerge from crates, then attack anyone who doesn't make the proper hand gesture.

Flesh Golems (4): hp 50, 60, 48, 47; *Monster Manual* 108.

Tactics: Unless the characters can make the correct gesture (arms crossed overhead), the golems attack. They're unsubtle but tenacious, engaging in melee combat at every opportunity, heedless of the danger.

Treasure: All kinds of mundane equipment is here, including almost any of the gear found in Chapter 7 of the *Player's Handbook*. There aren't any weapons or armor here. It's unlikely that characters give the equipment here more than a cursory notice. Most of the food here is dried; the kitchen (area 10) has fresh food for both the mind flayers and their humanoid slaves. A strongbox near the back (Search DC 20) marked "Drow Bribe Proceeds" has 2,000 gp and 1,500 sp.

4. BARRACKS (EL VARIABLE)

These are the living quarters for the rank-and-file mind flayer guards in Manzessine Prison. Most of them rush toward the prison cells when the alarm sounds. If the alarm has sounded, most of them are dead in areas 7 and 8. But two stragglers remain in the armory (area 5).

This is also the first place characters encounter one of the iris valve doors. Once they're through it, read the following:

Walls and curtains divide these rooms from the hallway that continues south. In each are eight egg-shaped beds, each with a matching wood-and-iron footlocker.

The iris-valve door on the south side of the room is typically kept closed but unlocked.

Creatures (EL 14): If the alarm hasn't sounded yet, there are eight mind flayers present—four in each room. But if the alarm has sounded, the barracks are empty.

Mind Flayers (8): hp 43, 45 51, 49, 44, 41, 32, 45; *Monster Manual* 136.

Tactics: The mind flayers are almost certainly unaware of the characters' presence unless they simply walk in. They do whatever it takes to flee so they can warn the rest of the prison, including suffering attacks of opportunity so their fellows can get past the PCs. They're also willing to *mind blast* each other if doing so gets all or most of the intruders as well. If reduced to 5 hp or less, they use *plane shift* to escape.

Treasure: The footlockers each have good locks (Open Lock DC 30), but each mind flayer has the key to its own locker. Thus half the footlockers present no obstacle if the PCs defeat the mind flayers. Inside the footlockers are extra robes, various knickknacks and religious icons, and a total of 250 gp.

Development: Keep track of how much noise the characters make here; if there are mind flayers in area

5, they might hear the PCs. The DCs for the mind flayers' Listen checks are +9 to hear things in the western barracks room and +13 to hear in the eastern barracks, due to distance and the door.

This is also the first place where the characters might see the oorga gas vents.

Ad-Hoc XP Adjustment: Characters gain no experience for mind flayers who successfully flee, because mind flayers would rather warn the rest of the prison than fight.

5. BASIC ARMORY (EL VARIABLE)

This is where the mind flayer guards keep weapons and other gear when they aren't on duty.

A rickety wooden stairway winds down along the wall of this octagonal room. Racks on the walls hold an array of spears, tridents, and whips. Shackles, chains, and truncheons also hang from the walls. A round table in the center of the room is covered with arrow shafts, heads, and feathers.

If the alarm has sounded, two mind flayers are here, grabbing weapons. If they heard the characters back in area 4, they're ready for a fight; otherwise the characters are likely to surprise them.

One of the mind flayer guards was learning fletching, hence the mess on the center table.

Creatures (EL 9): The two mind flayers are only here if the alarm has been sounded. If the characters somehow sneak in here, the armory is deserted.

Mind Flayers (2): hp 43, 45; *Monster Manual* 136.

Tactics: The mind flayers use *mind blasts* as long as the characters don't rush them and they have more than 15 hp. If they're badly wounded they try to rush the PCs, using their tentacles to get one last good meal before going down.

Treasure: There are 1d6+6 each of the following weapons: clubs, daggers, halfspears, heavy crossbows, nets, saps, shortspears, tridents, and whips. There are 1d3 suits each of the following armor: banded mail, full plate, and mithral breastplate.

Development: The mind flayers might bargain for their lives, but they aren't willing to give up any information of consequence. They intimate that they know a great deal, however, trying to buy time and watching for the PCs to let their guards down or make a mistake the mind flayers can exploit.

6. SPIRAL RAMP (EL 12)

This 60-foot diameter circular cavern disappears into the darkness below. In the center of the cavern is a corkscrew shaped ramp that spirals counterclockwise down into the gloom.

The spiral ramp, buttressed against itself periodically, goes down for 90 feet (six complete spirals). With no railings or visible means of support, it seems unsafe but is actually sturdy enough to walk on (but see the **Development** section below). But there is a real danger: the cryohydra guardian.

Creatures: The cryohydra sits on a ledge out of view from the top of the spiral ramp. But once the characters have completed their first circle downward, they're right across from it, and the cryohydra breathes on them.

The cryohydra knows all the prison guards and slaves by scent and won't attack them because it knows they feed it. For this reason, feeding the hydra is a mandatory duty for guards at Manzessine Prison. They've grown the hydra from an egg, and it's too large to fit out of this cavern now.

Eleven-Headed Cryohydra: hp 120; *Monster Manual*.

Tactics: The cryohydra breathes on intruders as soon as they come around the curve of the spiral ramp, then bites as far as it can reach with its heads. It continues this routine as long as it can. If the characters retreat beyond its reach, it's content to breathe at them until its taken 60 points of damage. If it's more than half wounded or the characters rush past it heading downward, it backs up, then attempts a running jump across to the spiral ramp (which the hydra makes automatically), before chasing down the PCs. It's not smart enough to try bull-rushing the characters off the spiral ramp, unless the characters try that tactic on it first.

Development: The cryohydra's massive weight might be too much for the spiral ramp to bear. There is a 20% chance each round, checked at the end of the hydra's turn, that the ramp begins to crumble and large cracks appear. At the end of the hydra's next turn, the spiral ramp collapses. Anyone still on the ramp takes falling damage as normal, then another 5d6 points of damage from the rubble that was once the spiral ramp.

7. ALCOVE CHECKPOINT (EL 10)

The dead mind flayers probably get the players' attention, but the real threat are the flesh golems hiding in alcoves above the doors. (Omit the mind flayers if the prison still isn't on alert.)

Beyond the door is a high-ceilinged natural cavern about 40 feet across. A wooden door seems to be the room's only salient feature—other than the two dead mind flayers that lie in front of the door.

If the players ask how tall the ceiling is, have the characters make Spot checks to see the alcoves 30 feet up holding flesh golems (Hide –5). But if the charac-

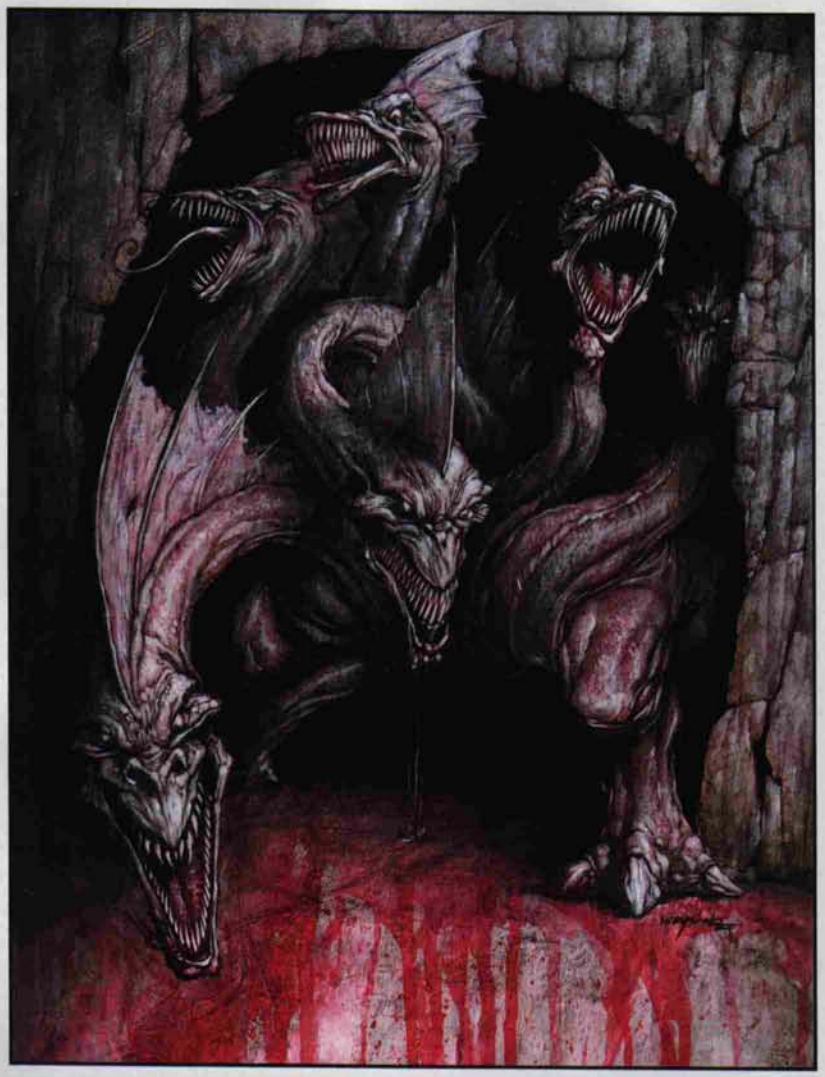
ters immediately move into the room because they're curious about the mind flayer bodies, the flesh golems can drop to the ground during the surprise round.

Creatures: Three flesh golems lurk in alcoves near the ceiling.

Flesh Golems (3): hp 46, 46, 41; *Monster Manual* 108.

Tactics: The flesh golems don't care about the 3d6 points of damage they take from the fall. If they can jump far enough from their alcoves, they land on a PC, dealing 6d6 points of damage. This knocks both the golem and the PC prone; scatter the golem into a random adjacent square after landing. After they land, the golems are straightforward melee fighters, showing a grasp of basic tactics like flanking and ganging up on one foe. But truly inventive tactics are beyond them.

Development: The dead mind flayers are casualties from the major battle between the guards and the escapees just beyond the door. That battle has devolved into a standoff that the characters probably upset.



8. LAKE (EL VARIABLE)

This is the water supply for the prison. If the prisoners have escaped their cells, their ringleader is hiding out here.

This natural tunnel slopes upward at a 45 degree angle. In a few spots, the pitch is even steeper, and iron ladder-rungs have been hammered into the stone.

If the alarm has sounded, add the following:

At the bottom of the first ladder lie three dead mind flayers. Draped over the top of the ladder is another mind flayer corpse.

Assuming the alarm was sounded, Albossk is standing at the top of the second ladder, ready to use *suggestion, charm monster,* or *mind blast* on the first character he sees. If and when the characters reach the top of that ladder, read the following:

Unlike the other natural caverns you've seen so far, this cavern is quite damp, with trickles of water running down the walls. The bottom half of the cavern is submerged, and a rickety little jetty juts out into the water. There's a stack of buckets on the end of the jetty.

Creatures (EL 13): Albossk, the ringleader of the escapees, is waiting and listening at the top of the ladders. He fled up here during a battle that encompassed areas 7–10 and was very dismayed to discover it wasn't the way out of the prison. The guards who were chasing him are now littering the ladder. They've all suffered brain extraction.

If the alarm hasn't sounded yet, the lake is deserted.

Albossk, Male Mind Flayer Clr5: CR 13; Medium-size Aberration; 8d8 (mind flayer) plus 5d8 (Clr); hp 54 (currently 51); Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 13; Atk +13 (1d4+2, 4 tentacles);

SA *mind blast, psionics,* improved grab, extract; SQ telepathy; SR 25; AL LE; Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +15; Str 14, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 18, Wis 22, Cha 19.

Skills: Bluff +9, Concentration +11, Diplomacy +13, Escape Artist +12, Hide +10, Knowledge (religion) +9, Knowledge (Underdark) +9, Listen +16, Move Silently +9, Spot +16. *Feats:* Alertness, Blind-Fighting, Combat Casting, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (tentacle).

Extract (Ex): If Albossk begins a turn with all four tentacles attached, and maintains his hold, he extracts the brain, killing the victim.

Improved Grab (Ex): Albossk must hit a Small to Large creature with a tentacle. If he hits, he gets a free grapple check to establish a hold. If successful, he can attach the remaining tentacles with another successful grapple check. If the foe is trying to escape, the mind flayer gets a +2 circumstance bonus for every tentacle attached at the beginning of the turn.

Mind Blast (*Sp*): 60-ft. cone; Will save (DC 19) or be stunned for 3d4 rounds.

Psionics (*Sp*): At will—*astral projection, charm monster, detect thoughts, levitate, plane shift, suggestion.* Caster level 8th; save DC 15 + spell level.

Telepathy (Su): Albossk can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 ft. that has a language.

Spells Prepared (5/6/5/3; base DC = 16 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds, detect magic* ×2, *guidance* ×2; 1st—*command, cure light wounds, detect evil, divine favor, Nystul's undetectable aura**, *shield of faith*; 2nd—*bull's strength, calm emotions**, *endurance*; 3rd—*cure serious wounds, deeper darkness, dispel magic** (already cast).

*Domain spell. *Domains:* Lawful (+1 caster level for lawful spells), Magic (can use arcane spell completion and spell trigger items as 2nd-level caster).

Possessions: None.

Tactics: Unlike many of the other escapees, Albossk is looking for allies, so he attempts *suggestion* or *charm monster* rather than start a fight right away. Using a combination of his spell-like abilities and Diplomacy, he tries to forge an alliance with the characters. This alliance lasts exactly long enough to get Albossk safely near the entrance, then Albossk double-crosses the characters (better to be the traitor than the victim, he reasons).

If Albossk hears enough to know that whoever's coming up the ladders poses a serious threat, he casts spells in the following order: *endurance, shield of faith, bull's strength,* and *divine favor.*

Ad-Hoc XP Adjustment: Because Albossk has no equipment, award 10% less experience for this encounter.

9. SLAVE QUARTERS (EL VARIABLE)

If the characters haven't triggered an alarm yet, this room is full of sleeping hobgoblin, drow, and duergar slaves, none of whom pose even the slightest challenge for the characters.

If the alarm has sounded, the slaves are dead and two escapees have barricaded themselves in here. They've destroyed the *continual flame,* so it's completely dark. If the characters have darkvision or bring a lights source to bear on the room, read the following:

> Pools of blood cover the floor, which is scattered with the bodies of about a dozen hobgoblins, drow, and duergar. Rude sleeping pallets line the walls, and ragged robes hang on hooks near each one. Some of the pallets have been tipped over on their edge.

This room has oorga gas vents.

Creatures (EL 13): Quasuliarint the mind flayer and Thut-hakh, a bugbear assassin, are behind two of the pallets. After their escape, they wound up pinned in this room by Lugrihoomius, who's currently in area 10. They've been trading sporadic *mind blasts,* crossbow bolts, and shouted threats ever since. They got separated from Albossk during the fighting and don't know he's still alive.

Quasuliarint, Male Mind Flayer Ftr3: CR 11; Medium-size Aberration; 8d8+16 (mind flayer) plus 3d10+6 (Ftr); hp 75 (currently 67); Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 13; Atk +11 melee (1d4+2, 4 tentacles) or +11 ranged (1d10/crit 19–20, heavy crossbow); SA *mind blast, psionics,* improved grab, extract; SQ telepathy; SR 25; AL LE; Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +9; Str 15, Dex 19, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 20.

Skills: Bluff +10, Concentration +13, Hide +10, Intimidate +13, Knowledge (history) +9, Knowledge (Underdark) +9, Listen +13, Move Silently +9, Spot +13. *Feats:* Alertness, Combat Casting, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Finesse (tentacle), Weapon Focus (tentacle).

Extract (Ex): If Quasuliarint begins a turn with all four tentacles attached, and maintains his hold, he extracts the brain, killing the victim.

Improved Grab (Ex): Quasuliarint must hit a Small to Large creature with a tentacle. If he hits, he gets a free grapple check to establish a hold. If successful, he can attach the remaining tentacles with another successful grapple check. If the foe is trying to escape, the mind flayer gets a +2 circumstance bonus for every tentacle attached at the beginning of the turn.

Mind Blast (*Sp*): 60-ft. cone; Will save (DC 19) or be stunned for 3d4 rounds.

Psionics (*Sp*): At will—*astral projection, charm monster, detect thoughts, levitate, plane shift, suggestion.* Caster level

8th; save DC 15 + spell level.

Telepathy (Su): Quasuliarint can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 ft. that has a language.

Possessions: Masterwork crossbow, 5 bolts.

Thut-hakh, Male Bugbear Rog2/Asn7: CR 11; Medium-size Humanoid (goblinoid); 3d8+9 (bugbear) plus 2d6+6 (Rog) plus 7d6+21 (Asn); hp 81 (currently 70); Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 13; Atk +13 melee (1d4+4/19–20, dagger) or +13 ranged (1d4+4/19–20, dagger); SA sneak attack +5d6, death attack; SQ scent, evasion, poison use, uncanny dodge; AL CE; Fort +6, Ref +15, Will +4; Str 18, Dex 18, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +12, Hide +19, Listen +2, Move Silently +19, Open Lock +16, Spot +2. *Feats:* Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Quick Draw.

Death Attack: If Thut-hakh studies his victim for 3 rounds, then makes a successful sneak attack with a melee weapon, the target must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 17) or die.

Possessions: Six masterwork daggers.

Tactics: As soon as the characters come to the doorway, Thut-hakh begins studying one of the characters, preferably an obvious spellcaster or lightly armored character, in preparation for a death attack. He has to peek around the corner of one of the pallets to do this, so characters might spot him (Thut-hakh's Hide check opposed by the PCs' Spot checks, should they care to make them). Quasuliarint waits until Thut-hakh charges from behind a pallet, then opens up with either his *mind blast* (if he can avoid hitting Thut-hakh) or his heavy crossbow (if he can't).

In melee, Thut-hakh uses the Mobility feat to get around the PCs, perhaps maneuvering for a flanking bonus if Quasuliarint is also drawn into melee. Because he has the Quick Draw feat, Thut-hakh isn't shy about throwing his daggers.

Ad-Hoc XP Adjustment: Because Quasuliarint and Thut-hakh are underequipped, award 15% less experience for this encounter.

10. KITCHEN (EL VARIABLE)

If the alarm has sounded, Lugrihoomius, the second-in-command of Manzessine Prison, is in the kitchen, waiting for reinforcements to arrive before he rushes into the slave quarters. Otherwise it's empty.

This is obviously a kitchen, dominated by a large wooden table in the center. Pots and pans hang from an iron ceiling rack, and boxes and jars line shelves on the walls. Steam rises from a pool of water in the corner.

The mind flayers cook very little. If something needs to be heated, they immerse it in the hot springs in the corner, which is hot enough to cook food (and flesh—the hot water deals 1d6 points of damage per round).

Creatures (EL 11): If the alarm has sounded, Lugrihoomius, the mind flayer who handles day-to-day operations at the prison is here, along with her ever-present shield guardian companion. They attack anyone who isn't a known member of the prison staff.

Lugrihoomius, Female Mind Flayer Ftr2: Medium-size Aberration; 8d8+16 (mind flayer) plus 2d10+4 (Ftr); hp 63; Init +4; Spd 20 ft.; AC 25, touch 13, flat-footed 22; Atk +12 (1d4+3, 4 tentacles); SA *mind blast, psionics,* improved grab, extract; SQ telepathy; SR 25; AL LE; Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +8; Str 17, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 18.

Skills: Bluff +9, Concentration +13, Hide +6, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +9, Knowledge (Underdark) +9, Listen +9, Move Silently +5, Sense Motive +7, Spot +9. *Feats:* Alertness, Combat Casting, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse (tentacle).

Extract (Ex): If Lugrihoomius begins a turn with all four tentacles attached, and maintains her hold, she extracts the brain, killing the victim.

Improved Grab (Ex): Lugrihoomius must hit a Small to Large creature with a tentacle. If she hits, she gets a free grapple check to establish a hold. If successful, she can attach the remaining tentacles with another successful grapple check. If the foe is trying to escape, the mind flayer gets a +2 circumstance bonus for every tentacle attached at the beginning of the turn.

***Mind Blast* (*Sp*):** 60-ft. cone; Will save (DC 19) or be stunned for 3d4 rounds.

***Psionics* (*Sp*):** At will—*astral projection, charm monster, detect thoughts, levitate, plane shift, suggestion.* Caster level 8th; save DC 15 + spell level.

Telepathy (Su): Lugrihoomius can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 ft. that has a language.

Possessions: +1 breastplate, +1 large steel shield, potion of cure serious wounds, rope of entanglement.

Shield Guardian: hp 80; *Monster Manual* 163.

Tactics: If possible, Lugrihoomius uses her Spring Attack feat from behind her shield guardian. If she hits with a tentacle, she attempts a brain extraction rather than springing back to safety.

11. FRESCO CHECKPOINT (EL 10)

This room houses two bodaks, charged by a high-level mind flayer cleric with guarding the prison cells against unauthorized entry—or exit.

At the bottom of the stairs is a wedge-shaped room covered with a fresco painting similar to the one in the entryway—various Underdark denizens drowning in massive purple tentacles. There are double wooden doors on the east wall. Flanking them like butlers are two gray, gaunt forms. Their eyes are empty white orbs.

If the alarm has sounded add the following: "Two mind flayers lie dead in the center of the room." (They rise as bodaks in a little less than 24 hours.)

Creatures: Two bodaks have guarded this room for untold years, averting their gaze for authorized passersby. The bodak's gaze killed two of the escapees, but Albossk, Quasuliarint, and Thut-hakh made their saves and fled through this room as fast as they could.

- **Bodaks (2):** hp 57, 55; *Monster Manual* 27.

Tactics: The bodaks move to within 30 feet of the characters as soon as they can, then fight conservatively, waiting for their foes to fail their Fortitude saves and keel over. They won't pursue foes beyond the room, and they fight here until slain.

12. OFFICER'S QUARTERS (EL VARIABLE)

This area is probably empty. But if the characters still haven't alerted anyone to their presence, Lugrihoomius and her shield guardian are here.

An intricately carved desk with a plush chair block the middle of this wide spot in the passageway. A single piece of paper sits atop the desk.

The paper is titled "Torture Schedule" and says "First-day—Thut-hakh; Third-Day—Absterthelid; Sixth-Day—Albossk; Eighth-Day—Open."

- **Lugrihoomius:** hp 63; see area **10** for complete statistics.
- **Shield Guardian:** hp 80; *Monster Manual* 163.

Tactics: As described in area **10**.

13. PRISON CELLS

If the alarm has sounded, nobody's here. But normally, Albossk, Dyema, Quasuliarint, Thut-hakh, Absterthelid, and eight other mind flayers are incarcerated here.

The ledge you're standing on overlooks a vast cavern that drops about 60 feet to jagged rocks below. A rough ramp snakes downward, eventually reaching the cavern floor near an iris-valve door in the west wall. Above the serpentine ramp hang a series of stalactites, each with an iron-barred door. On the lower two rows of stalactites, eldritch runes surround each door. Many of the doors hang open.

The runes are *sigils of static* and *sigils of suppression*. The top five stalactites are *stalactites of stasis*, so they don't have sigils, which would be redundant. For details on these items, see the "New Magic Items" sidebar.

Creatures: In the unlikely event that the prison is still quiet, there are eleven prisoners here. After the alarm, they scatter to various rooms.

- **Albossk:** hp 54; see area **8** for statistics.
- **Dyema:** hp 42; see area **19** for statistics.
- **Quasuliarint:** hp 75; see area **9** for statistics.
- **Thut-hakh:** hp 81; see area **9** for statistics.
- **Absterthelid:** hp 81; see area **19** for statistics.
- **Mind Flayers (8):** hp 42, 31, 41, 50, 44, 47, 40, 40; *Monster Manual* 136.

Tactics: If the characters raise a ruckus here, the prisoners attempt to escape as described in the "Prison Break" sidebar above. They only fight the characters if they have to—they'd much rather escape.

Ad-Hoc XP Adjustment: The characters don't get experience for sneaking through a room full of locked-up prisoners, but they might earn experience if they overcome anyone that gets free while the PCs are in the room.

14. CRUSHING ROOM (EL 10)

This small room is a deadly trap that separates the cells from the lower parts of the prison.

This room is almost entirely featureless. There's a door in the south wall, and four holes in a diamond pattern to the left of the door. Unlike the other iris-doors you've seen so far, this one has no opening lever or lock.

If the alarm has sounded, add the following:

An obviously dead mind flayer lies in the center of the room in a pool of blood. He is a mess of bloody pulp, compound fractures, and blunt trauma.

Trap: The four holes are a control panel that unlocks and opens the door, but it's a control panel for mind flayers. Lugrihoomius and Ulliphion are the only mind flayers who know the correct sequence. They snake their tentacles into the holes and press buttons at the end of each hole, then the door opens safely.

The trap triggers if the characters enter the wrong code or touch the door without first entering the code, which is north, east, west, south, south. Even if characters know the sequence, they're hard-pressed to actually reach the buttons; each hole snakes around several corners, so any poking implement must be flexible. Otherwise characters think they've

hit the buttons, when they really just poked the wall of each tentacle-hole.

The trap itself is simple: The doors lock shut, and 2 rounds later the walls move together. On the third round, the trap resets itself.

Crushing Room: CR 10; automatic reset; walls move together (16d6 points of damage); no attack roll required; Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 20).

Development: Assuming the alarm has sounded, the characters find six small flasks just beyond the south door. (Dyema and Absterthelid stole healing potions from guards they overpowered, then healed themselves after nearly being crushed by this room.)

15. PENTAGRAM CHECKPOINT (EL 10)

As soon as characters enter the room, read the following:

> With a puff of brimstone, a 12-foot tall insect with a longspear appears in the center of a black and silver pentagram inscribed in a circle on the floor. The west wall has an iris-valve door, and the south and east walls have wooden doors.

Trap: A *summon monster* IX spell trap summons a gelugon every time someone crosses the threshold of the doorway (treat the trigger as an *alarm* spell). The characters might assume that the devil is limited to the circle as if it were a summoning circle, but several small breaks (Search DC 25 to find) render the circle useless.

Summon Monster IX Trap: CR 10; proximity trigger; summons 1 gelugon; Search (DC 34); Disable Device (DC 34).

Gelugon: hp 113; *Monster Manual* 49.

Tactics: Unless the characters assail it immediately, the gelugon pretends like it's trapped within the circle (Bluff check modified by the PCs' Sense Motive check), hoping to draw the characters closer.

Development: When the prison break occurred, Dyema, Absterthelid, and five other mind flayers made it this far. They ran past the gelugon—Dyema and Absterthelid south and the other five east—but one mind flayer died from gelugon-inflicted wounds shortly thereafter.

Two of those mind flayers are listening at the door. Depending on what they hear, they might enter this room from area **16** and attack.

16. OFFICES/QUARTERS (EL VARIABLE)

These are the offices and living quarters of the elite mind flayer guards. Lugrihoomius has the northmost room, Ulliphion has the next one, Jackie has the third, and Xalliordel has the southmost. Four mind flayers are ransacking these rooms looking for anything that might help them get past the gelugon.

If the alarm hasn't sounded yet, these rooms are empty.

> Each of these rooms contains a small writing desk, bed, and an array of tapestries and other personal effects.

Creatures (EL 12): The four mind flayers here are not happy about winding up in a dead-end passageway. Two are listening at the door to area **15** while the other two search the living quarters. If the listening mind flayers hear something that obviously sounds like the defeat of the gelugon, they telepathically contact their fellows, then charge out into area **15**.

Mind Flayers (4): hp 44 (35 current), hp 41 (30 current), hp 52 (38 current), hp 51 (31 current); *Monster Manual* 136.

Tactics: These mind flayers are cautious, all too happy to use *mind blast* and their other spell-like abilities from a distance. If forced into melee, they gang up on spellcasters if possible, helping each other grapple.

Treasure: Secreted in various drawers and cabinets in the living quarters are 1,000 pp, 5,000 gp, three 100-gp pearls, 750 gp worth of diamond dust, a lawful evil *candle of invocation* (2 hours left) and a *scarab of protection* (3 attacks left).

Development: If it's been more than 20 minutes since the prison break, assume that the mind flayers have found all the treasure described above.

Ad-Hoc XP Adjustment: Because these mind flayers begin the encounter wounded, award 10% less experience for this encounter.

17. TORTURE CHAMBER (EL 11)

This is the workshop of Jackie, a powerful night hag who tortures the prisoners on a regular basis.

> A balcony with four wooden chairs overlooks a chamber of horrors: a rack, iron maiden, whips, thumbscrews, spiked wall shackles, and all the other implements of torture. Shelves on the wall have smaller tools of the torturer's trade, as well as an array of jars, urns, and other containers. A hideous woman next to the rack leers in your direction, dropping a scalpel and whetstone on the ground.

This room has oorga gas vents.

Creatures: Jackie is here regardless of the alarm—her orders are to remain in the torture chamber until Lugrihoomius or Ulliphion comes by to tell her it's all clear. But she takes great delight in tearing into the flesh of characters who disturb her.

Jackie, Night Hag Torturer: CR 11; Medium-size Outsider (evil); 12d8+12; hp 68; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 23, touch 14, flat-footed 22; Atk +17 melee (2d6+7 and disease, bite); SA spell-like abilities, dream haunting; SQ immunities, DR 20/+3; SR 25; AL NE; Fort +11, Ref +11, Will +12; Str 20, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 15, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +15, Concentration +16, Intimidate +15, Listen +18, Ride +15, Sense Motive +16, Spellcraft +17, Spot +14. *Feats:* Alertness, Combat Casting, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bite).

Disease (Ex): Demon fever—bite, Fortitude save (DC 18), incubation period 1 day; damage 1d6 temporary Constitution. Each day thereafter, on a failed save, the creature must immediately succeed at another Fortitude save or take 1 point of permanent Constitution drain.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*detect chaos, detect evil, detect good, detect law, detect magic, magic missile, polymorph self, ray of enfeeblement, sleep;* Caster level 8th; save DC 11 + spell level.

Dream Haunting (Su): Can visit dreams of chaotic or evil creatures, dealing 1 point of permanent Constitution drain per night.

Immunities (Ex): Night hags are immune to fire and cold, and to charm, sleep, and fear effects.

Possessions: ring of protection +3, necklace of fireballs (type VII), heartstone (see *Monster Manual* 140).

Tactics: Jackie is eager to mix it up with the characters—she hasn't had a proper fight in ages. If the tide of battle turns against her, she opens the door to area **18**, and if she has 15 hp or less, she uses her *heartstone* to escape to the Ethereal Plane.

Treasure: Among the grisly bric-a-brac on the shelves are three *echo stones* (see the "New Magic Items" sidebar). Two are blank, but the rightmost one has a message in it: "Albossk says to suppress the stasis on the human's chamber. He should be pragmatic enough to free the rest of us, and Albossk says he's mentally . . . pliable . . . in any case."

The mind flayers keep *echo stones* handy to record confessions obtained during Jackie's torture sessions. However, one of the *echo stones* is key to the prisoners' conspiracy. The *sigils of static* on each cell block prohibit communication among the prisoners, but the prisoners eventually learned that Jackie always grabbed the rightmost *echo stone* when she needed one. The prisoners used the leftmost *echo stone* to leave messages for each other—a risky technique, but they got away with it.

Development: If the characters raise a ruckus in the torture room, Kyurik in area **18** might hear them. He's actively listening if the alarm has sounded, but he's dormant (effectively rolling a 0 on his Listen check) if the characters have sneaked this far.

18. VIVISECTION LAB (EL 11)

Vivisection is just like dissection, except that it's performed on the living. And a devourer here takes his job very seriously.

A carved-up mind flayer floats face-up about an inch above a large, bloody table, its organs clearly visible through the incision across its torso. A tall skeleton with a smaller figure writhing within its rib cage stands next to the table, its claws stained red with blood.

The operating table has a stasis effect similar to the *stalactites of stasis* described in the "New Magic Items" sidebar. The mind flayer on the table is less than a second away from death, which means he takes a few days to die on the table. The "surgeon" is Kyurik, a devourer kept as a pet by the prison staff.

This room has oorga gas vents.

Creatures: Like Jackie, Kyurik has orders to remain here if an alarm sounds. It goes into the torture chamber if it hears sounds of a struggle.

Kyurik the Devourer: hp 79; *Monster Manual* 53.

Tactics: Kyurik has 12 levels of trapped essence when the fight starts. It tends to alternate between its *confusion* spell-like ability and its trap essence attack, only using its claws against foes who have repeatedly made their saves against these two attacks.

Development: If the characters pull the mind flayer off the table and cast a cure spell right away, they can save him. The mind flayer, another prisoner, gladly tells all he knows about the prison staff. If he gets even slightly nervous, however, he *plane shifts* away—his *tattoo of dimensional anchor* has been removed already.

19. HALLWAY GUARDIAN (EL VARIABLE)

When the characters begin heading down the first set of stairs, read the following.

On the landing at the bottom of the stairs are a human and a mind flayer, both dressed only in rags, and staring at each other intently. The stairway turns west and continues heading down.

Dyema, a human sorcerer, and Absterthelid, a mind flayer monk, are both escapees. At the bottom of the second stairway is a stone golem, patiently waiting at the point where the finished hallway yields to a natural stone passage.

This encounter area has two encounter levels listed because it's likely that the characters face Dyema and Absterthelid, then face the stone golem separately.

Creatures (EL 14): Dyema and Absterthelid are stuck, and they know it. After running past the gelugon trap, they ran straight into the stone golem (marked G on the map) and retreated halfway up the stairs. They're arguing telepathically on the landing, trying to decide which foe to face.

Creatures (EL 11): The golem has orders to attack anyone coming down the stairs who doesn't display the correct gesture. It won't chase characters up the stairs.

Dyema, Male Human Sor10: CR 10; Medium-size Humanoid; 10d4+20; hp 42; Init +2; Spd 30 ft., AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10; Atk +4 melee (1d3–1 subdual, unarmed); AL CE; Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +8; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 18.

Skills: Concentration +15, Diplomacy +16, Spellcraft +13. *Feats:* Combat Casting, Dodge, Empower Spell, Spell Focus (Enchantment), Spell Focus (Transmutation).

Spells Known (6/7/7/7/6/3; base DC = 14 + spell level): 0—*arcane mark, daze*, dancing lights, detect magic, light, open/close, ray of frost, read magic, resistance;* 1st—*charm person*, mage armor, magic missile, protection from good, shield;* 2nd—*cat's grace, endurance, invisibility, web;* 3rd—*haste, hold person*, fly;* 4th—*polymorph self, polymorph other*;* 5th—*telekinesis**.

*Because of Spell Focus (Enchantment) and Spell Focus (Transmutation), the base DC for saves against these spells is 16 + spell level.

Possessions: None.

Absterthelid, Male Mind Flayer Mnk5: CR 13; Medium-size Aberration; 8d8+16 (mind flayer) plus 5d8+10 (Mnk); hp 81; Init +9; Spd 40 ft.; AC 24, touch 21, flat-footed 19; Atk +15 (1d8, 4 tentacles); SA *mind blast, psionics,* improved grab, extract, stunning attack; SQ telepathy, evasion, deflect arrows, still mind, slow fall 20 ft., purity of body; SR 25; AL LE; Fort +8, Ref +11, Will +15; Str 10, Dex 20, Con 15, Int 18, Wis 20, Cha 18.

Skills: Bluff +9, Concentration +13, Hide +19, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Knowledge (Underdark) +9, Listen +12, Move Silently +17, Spot +12, Tumble +21. *Feats:* Alertness, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Weapon Finesse (tentacle), Weapon Focus (tentacle).

Extract (Ex): If Absterthelid begins a turn with all four tentacles attached, and maintains his hold, he extracts the brain, killing the victim.

Improved Grab (Ex): Must hit Small to large creature with tentacle. If he hits, he gets a free grapple check to establish a hold. If successful, he can attach the remaining tentacles with another successful grapple check. If the foe is trying to escape, the mind flayer gets a +2 circumstance bonus for every tentacle attached at the beginning of the turn.

Mind Blast (*Sp*): 60-ft. cone; Will save (DC 18) or be stunned for 3d4 rounds.

Psionics (*Sp*): At will—*astral projection, charm monster, detect thoughts, levitate, plane shift, suggestion*. Caster level 8th; save DC 14 + spell level.

Telepathy (Su): Absterthelid can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 ft. that has a language.

Possessions: None.

Stone Golem: hp 76; *Monster Manual* 108.

Tactics: The characters are welcome arrivals for the two escapees, who are eager to be out of the standoff. Dyema urges (verbally—forgetting his partner's telepathic ability) Absterthelid to *charm*, use *suggestion*, or otherwise get the PCs working for them. But Absterthelid is having none of it. He wants humanoid brains, and the more the better. Absterthelid uses *mind blast* and his formidable melee prowess to extract as many brains as he can.

Dyema has cast the following spells on himself prior to combat: *cat's grace, endurance, fly,* and *mage armor*. In the first round of combat, he casts *haste* and *shield*. When his *haste* runs out, he starts casting empowered *magic missiles*. If Dyema drops below 20 hp, he casts *polymorph self* to heal, choosing the form of an annis hag (Str 25, Dex 12, Con 14, +10 natural armor, 40 ft. speed, 10-foot reach).

Ad-Hoc XP Adjustment: Dyema and Absterthelid are underequipped, so award 10% less experience for them. Award full experience for the stone golem.

20. GRAVEYARD (EL 9)

Even dead—or in this case, undead—mind flayers hate humanoids.

The floor of this natural cavern is soft earth, and spots look like they've been turned over recently. Side passageways obviously have niches where skeletons moulder.

Two spectres lurk here. They wait until characters move into the side passages, then strike through the walls.

Creatures: The spectres look like ghostly mind flayers. Although they can no longer sup on brains, they still go through the motions as best they can.

Spectres (2): hp 45, 50; *Monster Manual* 169.

Tactics: The spectres attack from the walls if possible, where they have one-half cover and can retreat to safety with a 5-foot step. When they make energy drain attacks, it looks like their ghostly tentacles reach into their opponents' skulls. They fight until slain.

Treasure: Around the neck of one of the skeletons is a primitive-looking necklace that is actually a *necklace of prayer beads* (blessing, healing, karma). Another skeleton was buried with *incense of meditation*. Because the stone-walled niches are thick enough to block the *detect magic* spell, characters only discover these items with a successful Search check (DC 20) or if a spellcaster moves within 5 feet of the bones with *detect magic* active.

NEW MAGIC ITEMS

Echo Stone: A telepathic recording device, *echo stones* simply parrot back telepathic message. Creatures with telepathy can contact an *echo stone* as if it were a creature with a language, and the *echo stone* "remembers" up to 1 minute of telepathic communication. If a telepathic character transmits the word "Speak" to an *echo stone*, it repeats whatever communication it has stored. Sending a new communication to the *echo stone* erases the previous message.

Caster Level: 9th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *Rary's telepathic bond, sending; Market Price:* 12,000 gp.

Sigils of Static: These eldritch runes create a mental static that blocks all telepathic communication within the room.

Caster Level: 9th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *Rary's telepathic bond; Market Price:* 8,000 gp.

Sigils of Suppression: A *globe of invulnerability* fills the room. No spell effects of 4th level or lower function within this space. Such spells cannot be cast within the space, nor can their effects extend to within the space (though a targeted *dispel magic* can suppress the effect as with any other magic item).

Caster Level: 11th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *globe of invulnerability; Market Price:* 33,000 gp.

Stalactite of Stasis: Any creature placed fully within one of these prison cells is immediately put into a state of suspended animation (no save), slowing its life functions to the point where they essentially halt. Once inside, the creature feels the passage of one day for every decade that actually passes, although it spends the time in a dreamless sleep. Creatures inside the stalactite only awaken if pulled from the cell by someone outside.

Caster Level: 11th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *temporal stasis; Market Price:* 66,000 gp.

Tattoo of Dimensional Anchor: This cursed item, a liquid-metal tattoo of ever-changing arcane runes, prevents bodily extradimensional travel just as the *dimensional anchor* spell does (although spell resistance does not apply). Removing a *tattoo of dimensional anchor* requires a *remove curse* spell or the death of the wearer. If someone touches a tattoo on a dead creature, it flows onto that creature and attaches itself.

Caster Level: 15th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *dimensional anchor; Market Price:* 30,000 gp.

21. ELITE ARMORY (EL 8)

The door to this room is trapped, detonating when anyone touches it (see the **Trap** section below). When the characters open the door, read the following.

> This cavern is full of arming dummies scattered randomly across a square mat in the center. Along the walls hang a variety of exotic weapons.

There are 1d4 of every kind of exotic weapon listed in the *Player's Handbook* here (and see the **Treasure** section below).

Trap: The *destruction* trap on the door is particularly deadly because it resets after 1 round.

Destruction Trap: CR 8; *destruction* spell from 13th-level caster; Fort save (DC 20) partial; Search (DC 32); Disable Device (DC 32).

Treasure: Among the weapons on the walls are a *+1 bastard sword* and a *+1/+1 dire flail.*

Development: No one here can use these weapons effectively. One of the prison's officers, a mid-level fighter, is on leave right now.

Ad-Hoc XP Adjustment: No matter how many times the characters set off the trap, they only get experience for it once.

22. VERTICAL CAVERN

This area is empty, but it's the only way to get to area **23**.

> A series of chimneys climbs hundreds of feet straight up.

Development: Mind flayers can *levitate* as a spell-like ability, so they don't need ladders or stairs. They want their slaves and visitors to be able to get to other parts of the prison complex, but the valve control room (area **23**) is for them alone.

23. VALVE CONTROL ROOM

This room contains a puzzle that, if solved, lets the characters spread poison gas into many of the rooms in the prison complex.

> After a long ascent, you reach this small room with only three salient features: a padded chair, a metal cube rising like a desk in front of the chair, and a small notch cut into the wall above the cube. The cube seems to have a series of levers on the top face.

Control Panel: Figure 1 shows what the control panel looks like; feel free to photocopy it and show it to the players when they reach this area. If manipulated properly, anyone at the control panel can fill many of the rooms with poison gas. But the gas is heavier than air, so it's a one-way trip—once gas goes down the tube, it doesn't come back up. It naturally dissipates to nontoxic levels after about an hour.

The slanted line represents the pipe through which the gas travels, and each lever is a valve. All the valves begin in the closed position. The levers along the slanted line swing about 120 degrees clockwise, so the handle is parallel to the slanted line. That means the valve is open. The levers along the vertical lines turn 90 degrees clockwise from their starting positions; this opens the corresponding valve and closes all iris doors to the corresponding room.

The rooms are, in order from the top: bridge of fumes (area **1**), barracks (area **4**), slave quarters (area **9**), prison cell chamber (area **13**), torture chamber (area **17**), vivisection chamber (area **18**), magic laboratory (area **26**), and shrine (area **28**, and the gas eventually dissipates into the rest of the Underdark). Clever players likely guess at least some of the locations from the pictograms (as a telepathic race, mind flayers eschew written Undercommon when they can).

Because all the valves are closed at the start, nothing happens until the topmost lever is moved into the

Figure 1: Valve Control Panel

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open position. Then the gas pours down to the tube, and characters looking out the viewport see the level of oorga gas drop immediately.

The supply of oorga gas below the bridge of fumes isn't unlimited. Once the characters release enough gas to flood two rooms (or just one if it's the prison cells). It takes a week for the gas supply to replenish from natural fissures in the chasm.

Oorga Gas: Inhaled; Fortitude save (DC 18) resists, 1d6 Con/2d6 Con.

Development: If the characters dawdle during this adventure, it's conceivable that Ulliphion might finish consulting with her superiors. If she does, she comes here, then uses her *crystal ball* to see where the escapees and intruders are. Ulliphion uses the valve controls to gas them (killing her own staff if necessary), then handles any pockets of resistance personally. If Ulliphion thinks the characters are about to enter a room she can gas, she waits.

Ad-Hoc XP Adjustment: Characters who survive a gassing attempt have overcome a CR 8 trap.

24. HALLWAY TRAP (EL 10)

This section of hallway has a trap activated by anyone who tries to open the door (Ulliphion set it so she could consult with her superiors with the sending pool.

You're confronted with another wooden door.

Trap: Touching the door causes two poisoned scythes to sweep from the ceiling, one right in front of the door and another 5 feet back. It only triggers once.

Deathblade Ceiling Scythe (2): CR 8; Atk +16 melee (2d4+8 plus poison); poison (deathblade, Fortitude save [DC 20] resists, 1d6 Con/2d6 Con); Search (DC 24); Disable Device (DC 19).

25. LIBRARY

This is obviously a library. The floor is draped in rich carpets, and shelves full of books line the walls.

About half the books here are histories of the mind flayers and other Underdark races, one quarter are legal tomes, and the remaining quarter are arcane tomes (mostly academic works, but Ulliphion's spellbook sits inconspicuously among them).

Development: Ulliphion is actively listening from within the sending chamber (area 27). It's 80 feet away and through one or two doors, depending on whether the characters left the library door open.

26. MAGIC LABORATORY (EL 11)

Ulliphion's workshop is now home to her manservant, a mohrg. Sensing trouble, Ulliphion has cast back a black curtain to reveal another surprise for intruders.

A long table covered in half-completed mystical diagrams, flasks, alembics, and other arcane components dominates this room. An alcove to the east holds a skeletal corpse with a long tongue with a claw on the end. And a glowing symbol envelops the chamber in will-sapping energy from the south wall.

The characters must simultaneously deal with a trap and a monster.

Trap: The *symbol of stunning* is ordinarily covered with a curtain, but Ulliphion drew it back in case any intruders or escapees made it this far. The mohrg is undead, so it isn't affected by the symbol.

***Symbol of Stunning* (heightened):** CR 10; stuns 250 hit points of creatures; Fortitude (DC 23) negates.

Creatures: The mohrg is Ulliphion's personal servant. In exchange for service, Ulliphion lets it torture and kill prisoners periodically.

Mohrg: hp 99; *Monster Manual* 137.

Tactics: The mohrg gleefully coup de graces any stunned character it can get to, and it's smart enough to grapple any obvious spellcasters.

Development: Ulliphion is actively listening from within the sending chamber (area 27). It's 80 feet away and through one or two doors, depending on whether the characters left the laboratory door open.

27. SENDING POOL (EL 15)

Ever since the alert, Ulliphion has been using the magic of this room to contact her superiors and inform them of the security breach at the prison. Soon she heads upstairs and tries to clean up the mess.

This natural cavern has a shallow pool of water in its center, and the pool briefly shows the reflection of a cityscape around the rim of a volcano, then appears as ordinary water. A red-robed mind flayer turns its unblinking stare your way.

Creatures: Ulliphion is in charge of Manzessine Prison.

Ulliphion, Female Mind flayer Wiz7 (diviner): CR 15; Medium-size Aberration; 8d8+16 (mind flayer) plus 7d4+14 (Wiz); hp 78; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13; Atk +12 melee (1d4, 4 tentacles); SA *mind blast, psionics,* improved grab, extract; SQ telepathy; SR 25; AL LE; Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +14; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 24, Wis 16, Cha 20.

Skills: Bluff +13, Concentration +20, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (geography) +14, Listen +18, Sense Motive +14; Spellcraft +25, Spot +18.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Casting, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Evocation), Weapon Finesse (tentacle).

Extract (Ex): If Ulliphion begins a turn with all four tentacles attached, and maintains its hold, it extracts the brain, killing the victim.

Improved Grab (Ex): Must hit Small to large creature with tentacle. If it hits, it gets a free grapple check to establish a hold. If successful, it can attach the remaining tentacles with another successful grapple check. If the foe is trying to escape, the mind flayer gets a +2 circumstance bonus for every tentacle attached at the beginning of the turn.

Mind Blast (Sp): 60-ft. cone; Will save (DC 19) or be stunned for 3d4 rounds.

Psionics (Sp): At will—astral projection, charm monster, detect thoughts, levitate, plane shift, suggestion. Caster level 8th; save DC 15 + spell level.

Telepathy (Su): Ulliphion can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 ft. that has a language.

Spells Prepared (5/7/6/5/3; base DC = 17 + spell level): 0—*detect magic* ×2, *detect poison, mage hand, open/close;* 1st—*mage armor, magic missile* ×4, *shield, true strike;* 2nd—*cat's grace, endurance, invisibility, see invisibility, spectral hand, web;* 3rd—*clairaudience/clairvoyance, haste, fireball*, lightning bolt*, vampiric touch;* 4th—*arcane eye, enervation* ×2.

*Because of Spell Focus (Evocation), the base DC for saves against these spells is 19 + spell level.

Spellbook: 0—all but *daze;* 1st—*burning hands, detect undead, identify, mage armor, magic missile, obscuring mist, shield, shocking grasp, true strike;* 2nd—*bull's strength, cat's grace, endurance, invisibility, locate object, see invisibility, scare, spectral hand, web;* 3rd—*blink, clairaudience/clairvoyance, haste, fireball, lightning bolt, stinking cloud, tongues, vampiric touch;* 4th—*arcane eye, detect scrying, enervation, ice storm.*

Possessions: Crystal ball, staff of frost (9 charges), scroll of *teleport.*

Tactics: Ulliphion cast the following spells as soon as the alarm sounded: *cat's grace, endurance,* and *mage armor.* Given time to prepare for intruders she knows are nearby, she casts spells in this order: *arcane eye* and *shield.* In the first round of combat she casts *haste,* then uses *mind blast* on as many characters as possible. In the second round, she uses *enervation* twice on a character that looks like a spellcaster. Ulliphion holds nothing back, but she *plane shifts* to the Astral Plane if reduced to 10 hp or less. If she gets wounded, she tries *vampiric touch* (perhaps through *spectral hand*) to heal herself. And although she's a wizard, she's not shy about using her mind flayer spell-like abilities and tentacles.

28. SHRINE (EL 10)

This room is covered in low mats and throw pillows. A rough stone altar is carved from the north wall in the bas-relief of a mind flayer head. Abstract black and gray tapestries, dizzying to the eye in their complexity, hang from the walls.

The secret door behind the tapestry in the southeast corner of the room is obvious from this side, but well-concealed from the other side.

Trap: The characters can't see it at first, but there's a *symbol of death* behind the tapestry above the altar.

***Symbol of Death* (heightened):** CR 10; Kills 150 hit points of creatures; Fortitude (DC 23) negates.

29. WAY OUT

At this point, the characters can resume their journey through the Underdark.

> Through the secret door, the passage twists and turns, climbing gradually for about a quarter mile. Then it widens to a more typical Underdark highway-cavern.

CONCLUSION

A squad of mind flayer commandos, including both fighters and spellcasters, arrives at Manzessine Prison two days after the alert and escape attempt. After searching the prison top to bottom, they obliterate it, but they leave a navigable passage though the ruins (no sense in disrupting Underdark travel, after all.

Any mind flayers that escaped using *plane shift* undoubtedly tell their tentacled masters about the PCs. Powerful forces in mind flayer society are greatly annoyed at the loss of Manzessine Prison, and they might be angry enough to seek revenge.

Finally, some of the prisoners might successfully escape. Albossk in particular might owe the characters some grudging respect, and a favor if they ever meet him again. Whether the characters are comfortable collecting favors from brain-eating criminals is another story. Ω

APPENDIX

The following monster from the FORGOTTEN REALMS *Campaign Setting* appears in "Spiral of Manzessine." It is reprinted here for your convenience.

PACK LIZARD

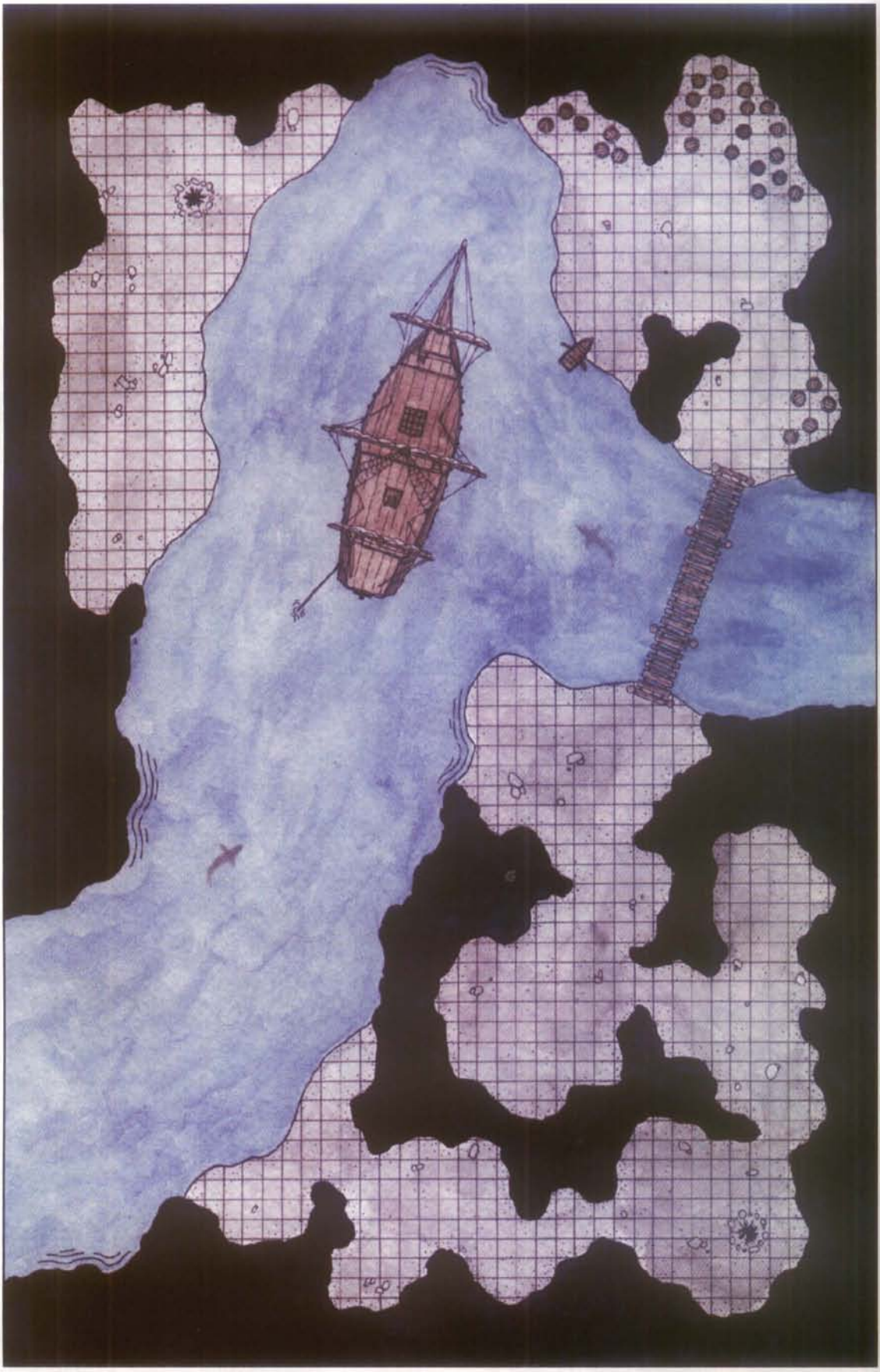
Large Animal
Hit Dice: 8d8+40 (76 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft., climb 30 ft.
AC: 15 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural)
Attacks: Bite +12 melee
Damage: Bite 2d6+10
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.
Saves: Fort +11, Ref +7, Will +3
Abilities: Str 25, Dex 13, Con 21, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2
Skills: Climb +21, Hide +3*, Listen +4, Move Silently +5, Spot +4

Climate/Terrain: Any underground
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: —

Related to the giant lizards found in some surface lands, this creature averages 15 feet long (plus tail) and 5 feet wide. The sticky pads on its feet allow it to walk freely over most floors, walls, and ceilings in the subterranean tunnels of the Underdark. Drow and other intelligent races of the Underdark frequently use the pack lizard as a beast of burden. A light load for one of these creatures is 800 pounds, a medium load is 1,600 pounds, and a heavy load is 2,400 pounds. On slopes between 45 and 90 degrees, the pack lizard can carry up to a medium load without falling. On slopes beyond the vertical (that is, when the lizard is upside-down), it can carry a light load without falling.

Skills: The pack lizard receives a +4 racial bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks. *In rocky areas or natural caverns its Hide bonus improves to +8.

Nodwick
by Aaron Williams
www.nodwick.com
HE'D BETTER BE IN THERE; THIS IS THE LAST CELL.
I HOPE HE LEARNED WHERE THE EXIT IS. IF NOT, WE'RE IN DEEP YOGURT.
YEAGAR! ARE YOU OKAY?
HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO SCOPE OUT THE LAYOUT OF THIS PLACE? WE NEED TO FIND—
I'M WAY AHEAD OF YOU, AND YOU'RE BETTER OFF WITH A DATING SERVICE.
I WAS REFERRING TO THE EXIT.
OH. I THOUGHT YOU MEANT THE WOMEN'S WING.



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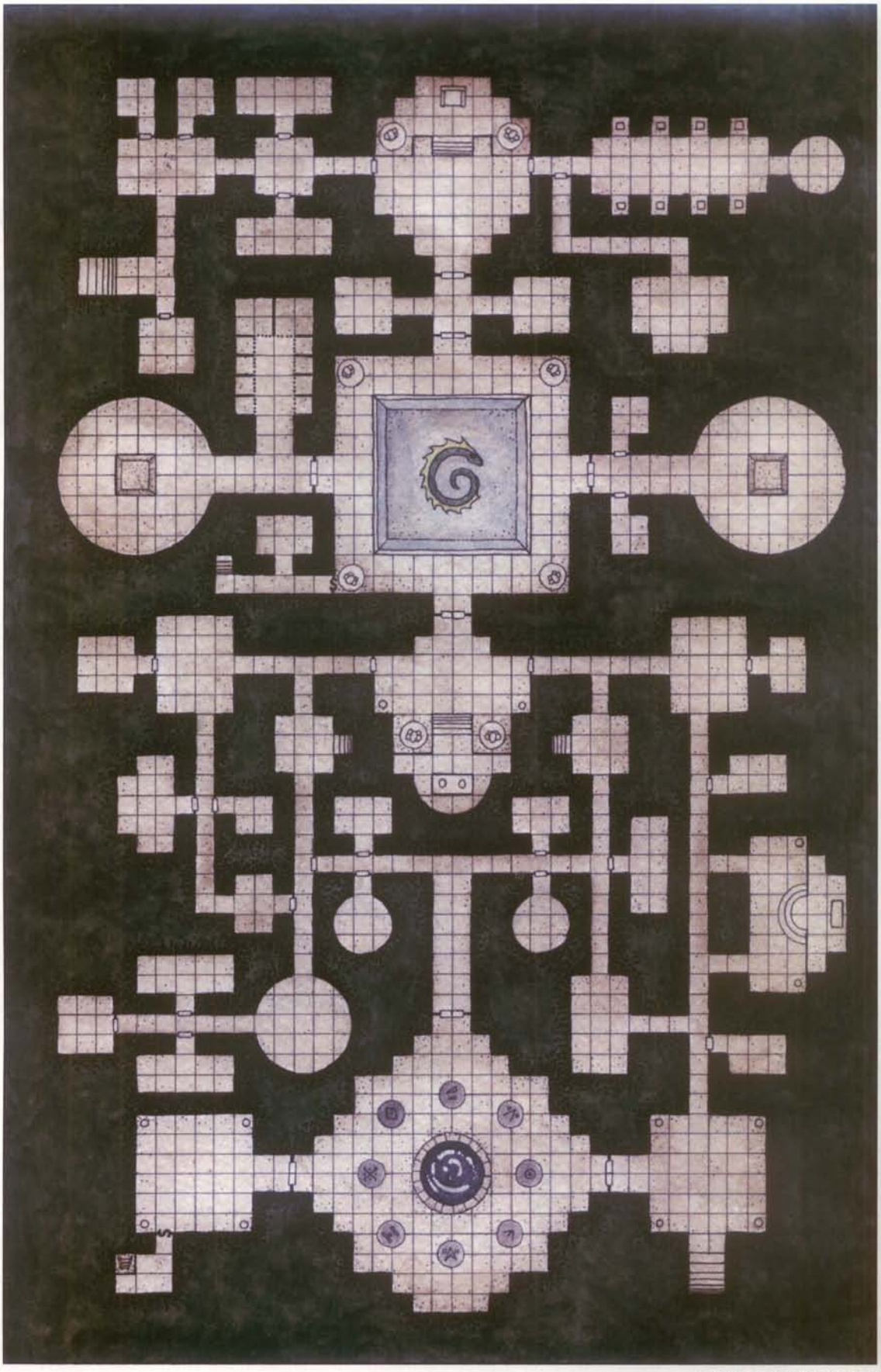

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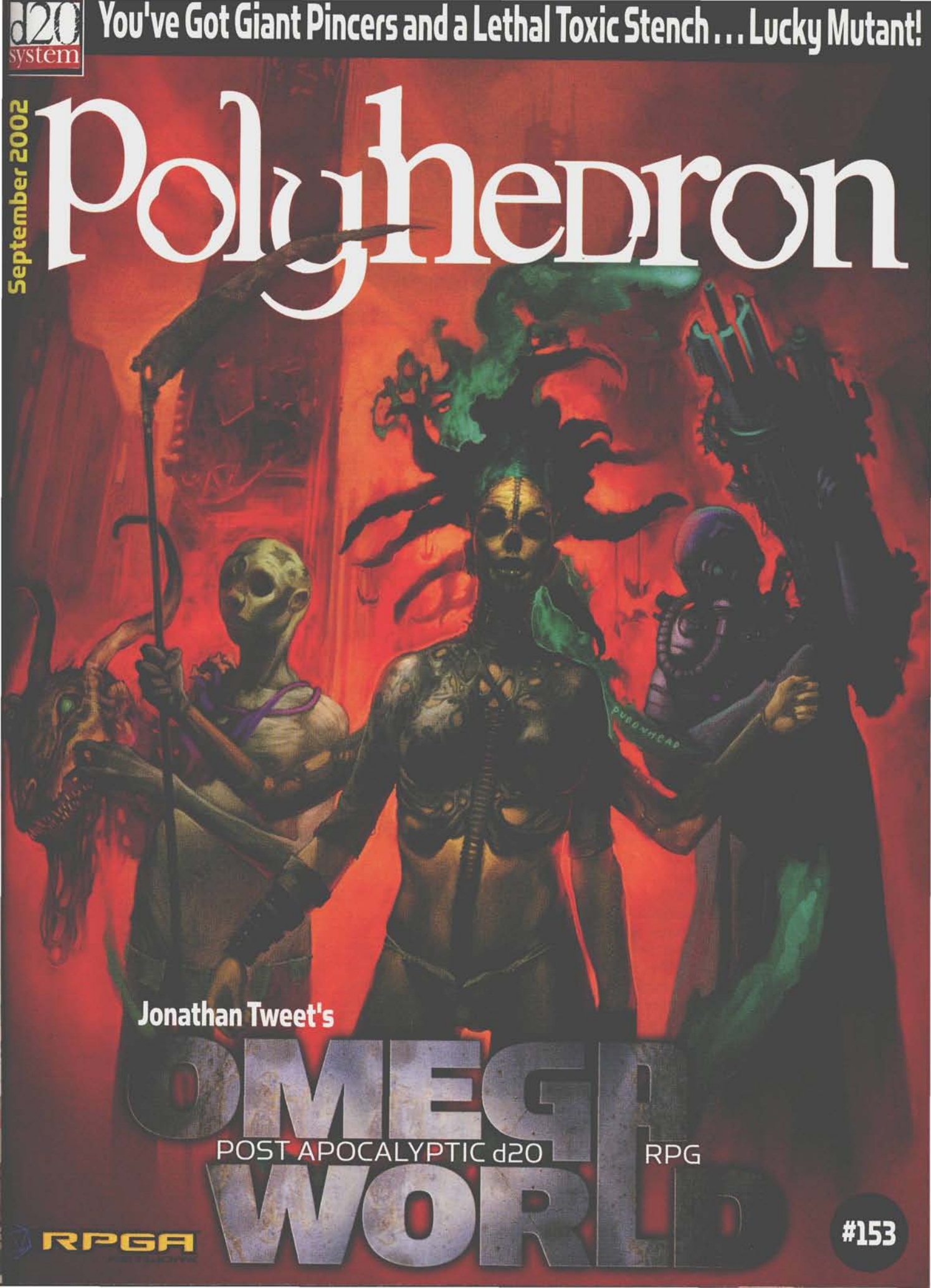
d20 system

You've Got Giant Pincers and a Lethal Toxic Stench . . . Lucky Mutant!

September 2002

Polyhedron



Jonathan Tweet's

OMEGA WORLD

POST APOCALYPTIC d20 RPG

RPGA

#153

Our Old Publisher on Our New Publishing Company

Exactly one day before this issue went to press, Wizards of the Coast sold its periodicals department to a new company, Paizo Publishing, LLC. Our former group publisher, Johnny Wilson, is the president of the new venture, and he had the good taste to hire the entire department, for which we are all grateful. Johnny has a few words he'd like to share regarding what the change means for this magazine. Go read his thoughts over on the DUNGEON side, and come back here when you're ready for more Johnny. He'll be waiting for you, smiling like a devlish teenager who finally got the keys to dad's *good* car.–Erik

In words associated with the late Douglas Adams, "Don't Panic!" This issue may have a smaller page count than usual and, yes, a higher price than usual, but that's not the plan going forward. So, get out your babelfish and get ready to translate the publisherese. I've already explained the rationale for the price increase on the *DUNGEON* side of this magazine. Now, I'm going to give you my pledge. Going forward, we're going to do our best to provide a d20 Mini-Game, a premium (like monster/Mini-Game tokens), and as many pages as we can reasonably print without losing money.

As the president of Paizo Publishing, LLC, I'm proud to be publishing POLYHEDRON as part of DUNGEON (officially known as DUNGEON ADVENTURES™) magazine. The issue you are currently holding is a strange hybrid. The editorial work was performed prior to the Paizo obtaining the license to publish DUNGEON, but Paizo paid for the art, manuscripts, printing, and shipping. As we were going to press, several advertisers had heard the rumors of the transition to the new company and, as is often the case, dropped their ads at the last moment. So, we have the unfortunate challenge of presenting an issue with a thinner spine that costs more than the previous issue. The good news is that the number of pages we've dropped were all scheduled to be ads, so readers didn't lose any content in the change.

Meanwhile, I'm happy to announce that everyone working on this magazine (and the other magazines we publish) has accepted a position with Paizo Publishing, LLC. This is expressly good because everyone who does advertising, art, circulation and, of course, editorial for DUNGEON/POLYHEDRON plays in at least one roleplaying campaign. Many of us run at least one campaign. We love working on these magazines because it allows us to share our enthusiasm with others. We pledge to make them even better. Stick with us and, once again remembering Douglas Adams's magnum opus, you'll never be caught without a towel.

Of course, this issue's theme would not meet the classification given to earth in that marvelous series of books. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* classified earth as "Mostly Harmless." *Omega World*, our tribute to the classic GAMMA WORLD, is anything BUT harmless. No offense to purist D&D players who buy the magazine solely for the DUNGEON side, but I personally believe that *Omega World* alone is worth the higher price of this issue.

Of course, I'm biased. The ultimate fate of these Mini-Games is entirely up to you.

Johnny Wilson
President, Paizo Publishing

Bolt and Quiver by Stan!

PUT THE PRISONERS IN HERE. MR. JAQUON WILL BE IN TO DEAL WITH THEM ...PERSONALLY.
Stan!
UNTIL HE ARRIVES, THOUGH, PLEASE FEEL FREE TO USE ANY OF OUR FACILITIES ....
THERE'S A FULLY STOCKED BAR AND A SAUNA. I CAN PROVIDE TRUNKS IF YOU DIDN'T BRING ANY.
I DON'T GET IT... AM I SUPPOSED TO TRY TO ESCAPE OR GIVE YOU A BIG TIP?
DEPENDS ON HOW MUCH POISONED FOAM YOU WANT ON YOUR LATTE.
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RPGA NETWORK

News from the Top

RPGA Membership Fees Dropped

In our bid to continue to offer better games for more members, the RPGA has dropped ALL membership fees as of the time you read this. For those of you now leaping around looking for the telephone number of HQ as you just paid us renewal money, I ask you to first please read on, as I suspect you'll like what I have to say.

To address and thank those members who have joined, renewed, or who have multi-year memberships, we are working with Chessex, a leading manufaturer of gaming aids and accessories, to develop an RPGA Network member-exclusive vinyl Battlemat that will be sent free of charge to all RPGA Network members who joined prior to July 1, 2002.

Measuring 23 1/2 in. by 26 in., the new RPGA Battlemats feature a one-inch square grid suitable for Dungeons & Dragons miniature play. The Battlemats will be available for collection at both the US and UK Gen Cons. Thereafter, we will mail all remaining qualifying members their Battlemats at absolutely no charge.

Is that the only good news? Not hardly.

I promised in *Polyhedron* #151 that I would release additional information regarding our brand-new DM Training program as that program was developed. I'm pleased to inform you that stage one of that program will be live by the time you read this. I'd like to offer a huge thanks to all those who have contributed to setting up this important initiative in such a short period of time.

The entry level in the new DM program is known as Herald level. To qualify as a Herald level DM, new members must pass a simple test of basic table managment skills administered via the rpga.com website.

This and future tests for higher judge levels have been designed to help DMs deal with situations that occasionally arise during Network-sanctioned games (what to do when a player cheats, when a die rolls off the table, or even when a player falls asleep!). The entry-level Herald test is available now. New members must take the test to qualify to order RPGA scenarios, including Living Greyhawk adventures.

Current members in good standing retain their existing judge ranking (and the ability to order scenarios). Once we've rolled out the complete program, higher level judges may have to sustain their current ranking through participation and/or additional tests, but that's a ways off.

Members who joined prior to July 1st, 2002 but who do not have an existing judge rating may continue to order scenarios as normal. Once the full program is in swing, such members will be required to maintain a DM rank at the minimum level to retain that ability, however.

We're initiating this new program because we feel it will improve the play experience of all RPGA members by giving Network DMs a common set of "best practices." In doing so, we hope to create a corps of superb Dungeon Masters. Give it a little time, and we're certain you'll agree.

For now, may the goddess Tymora shine upon d20s everywhere.

Ian Richards
Worldwide RPGA Director
ianr@wizards.com

Bolt and Quiver by Stan!

YOU'RE MACE JAQUON?
YOU WERE EXPECTING MAYBE GARY GYGAX?
I WAS EXPECTING A LEGENDARY FORCE OF UNCONTESTED EVIL ... NOT A PASTY-FACED CLOWN DRESSED LIKE A RETIRED SILK MERCHANT ON VACATION!
Stan!
WHAT?!? THIS WAS THE HEIGHT OF VILLAINOUS FASHION WHEN I BOUGHT IT.
YEAH, BACK WHEN ZERO WAS A GOOD ARMOR CLASS
ACTUALLY, IT WAS WHEN HALFLINGS HAD FURRY FEET AND SENSE ENOUGH NOT TO PISS OFF A LEGENDARY FORCE OF UNCONTESTED EVIL.
YES, BUT WE'RE MUCH QUICKER NOW!
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First Watch

Previews, notes & news on the world of d20 gaming

Agents of PSI

In October, Wizards of the Coast will release d20 Modern, *a 320-page hardcover rulebook that covers everything you need to run campaigns based in the modern era. The game is set to include four "campaign models" that provide rules and backgrounds for distinct flavors of modern gaming.*

In Polyhedron *#150, we showed you* Shadow Chasers, *in which young heroes struggle against vampires, demons, and worse before the backdrop of an incredulous world. Last issue, we revealed* Genetech, *which offers players the chance to play government-sponsored operatives infused with animal DNA.*

Conceived by industry veteran Jeff Grubb, Agents of PSI *also involves shady government conspiracies and even shadier psychic operatives. Tune in in two months for a preview of the final campaign model,* Urban Arcana.

When the going gets weird,
The weird turn pro.
—Hunter S. Thompson

The *Agents of PSI* campaign model adds some parahuman mental abilities to the cinematic spy genre. Its tone is action-packed, conspiracy based, and larger-than-life. Conflicts are hidden in the shadows between power groups seeking to control (or destroy) reality as we know it. The heroes are dedicated agents fighting the good fight, preserving the world that we know and love. They move behind the curtains of reality and in the corridors of power, and stop potential disasters before the public knows anything is wrong.

The Role of the Heroes

The heroes in an *Agents of PSI* campaign are agents of the government with a secret mission, powers beyond those of normal humans, and a hidden agenda. They have the potential to be (though are not required to be) individuals with psionic abilities that give them an extra edge.

The heroes are larger than life, but exist in a relatively real world. James Bond would fit into an *Agents of PSI* campaign, and so would Sydney Bristow (aka *Alias*), Napoleon Solo, James West, Emma Peel, Scully and Mulder, and about half the casts of shows on the Sci-Fi Channel.

Background

There have always been humans with a little bit of extra power—prophets, sages, legendary warriors, and charismatic leaders who have had an "extra" ability. Only in the last hundred years have these abilities been studied fully (if secretly) and more importantly, only in the past fifty years have those with psionic abilities been recruited, trained, and organized.

A hundred years ago, organizations such as the Theosophy Society explored the paranormal, explaining things in their own (Victorian) terms. During WWII, the Third Reich showed some success in harnessing paranormal talents. In the years of the Cold War, the rivalry between the superpowers encouraged governments to leave no opportunity for dominance unexplored, and the practice of identifying and recruiting paranormal talents began in earnest.

There has been an upswing in paranormal activity and parahuman espionage since 1987. Some claim that surge results from proper funding and a greater number of agents assigned to exposing activity that had previously been considered urban legend. Others note that late summer of 1987 was the Harmonic Convergence, a celestial event during which the majority of the planets lined up on one side of the sun, and that this event created psychic ripples that affected the world at large.

The increased government involvement in psionic research has also revealed other, older players on the field, ranging from business interests to cults to secret societies. They have their own agents and their own agendas, agendas not as benign as those of the Department of Paranormal Science and Investigation. Your role, as an Agent of PSI, is to stop them.

Leanne Buckley

RPGA Fun at the Gen Con Game Fair

Party with the RPGA during Gen Con's Last Year in Milwaukee

By Robert Wiese

In this, the last year that the Gen Con Game Fair will be held in Milwaukee, the RPGA Network is coming on as strong as ever. We know a lot of our members will be packing the Safehouse every night for one last drink (or 10 or 20), but we'll be holding the best games at the Game Fair in the Arena throughout the convention for the rest of you. Our space may be a little limited, as renovation is taking place on the Annex building that we connect to, but the Arena will be filled with gamers having a great time.

You might think we'd be happy just to do what we have always done this last year in Milwaukee, but not us! We are introducing some new changes that we hope will make the games better and more fun for you. The first of these is that we have lengthened the game time to five hours from four. Most of our members play in our LIVING campaign games, and these tend to run short of time with only four hours to play. To make the games more relaxed, we are allowing you five hours to play your game this year. If you finish early, go grab some food or stroll the first few booths of the Exhibit Hall (don't try to get too far into the Exhibit Hall unless you have at least an hour until your next game). Our games start at 8 am, 2 pm, and 7 pm every day (only 8 am on Sunday), with a scheduled break for lunch between 1 and 2 pm.

Second, we have simplified our scoring system. In the past, all the players have voted for the best player at each table, a process that takes extra time and turns a lot of people off. This year, we have reduced the paperwork to a simpler "Judge Vote" system in which the players rate the judge, and the judge ranks the players. Less time with scoring means more time having fun or getting food.

So what is a LIVING campaign anyway? What kinds of games are we running? I'm glad you asked. The RPGA presents two "styles" of role-playing games at the show: those with characters provided, called Classics, and those for which you bring your own character, called LIVING campaigns. LIVING campaigns are extremely popular, and we have a great many to choose from. Our biggest is LIVING GREYHAWK, a world-wide campaign set in the oldest D&D setting, the same one that Gary Gygax and his friends used. Players play in a region that corresponds to where they live at home.

Following that in size, but equal in popularity, is LIVING CITY, a campaign set in the FORGOTTEN REALMS that has been running for 15 years. You can also play a Jedi knight in LIVING FORCE, a Gothic adventurer in LIVING DEATH, a tribal humanoid in LIVING JUNGLE, a samurai in LIVING ROKUGAN, a shadowrunner in a near future setting in VIRTUAL SEATTLE, or a fantastic adventurer in LIVING ARCANIS or LIVING DRAGONSTAR. You can even try playing a warped cowboy in LIVING DEADLANDS, a new campaign now in the review process.

Most LIVING campaigns use D&D or d20 rules, but LIVING ROKUGAN is based in the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* and VIRTUAL SEATTLE in the *Shadowrun 3rd Edition Roleplaying Game*. Visit the RPGA's website at www.rpga.com for links to the official websites for these campaigns. We also have a character center at the convention to help you create characters for whichever game suits your fancy.

Another innovation at this year's Gen Con is the launch of our REALMS CYCLE, a one-year LIVING campaign based around the *City of the Spider Queen* super-adventure on sale in September. With the RPGA, you can create a character for this huge quest, play it at home in the main adventure, and play it in supplemental adventures at RPGA-sponsored conventions throughout the year. The adventure starts this year at Gen Con with our REALMS CYCLE *Members-Only Preview Event*, and the whole thing culminates epically at next year's Gen Con.

RPGA members, and that means you, should plan to attend the Members Meeting Wednesday night before the show, at 7 pm. The exact location will be posted to the RPGA's website, and we'll have signs up at the Arena to direct you to the right place. At the meeting the RPGA staff will tell you what's ahead for the Network, and what's changed now, and give you a chance to ask questions and air your views. Plan also to attend the Awards Ceremony at 2 pm, location to be announced during the show. See who wins our big prizes, and catch any last announcements from the staff.

Big prizes? You bet we have big prizes. We always do, so why stop now? Our big prizes are for our Pinnacle events, which are combinations of our scheduled games. Play in several RPGA events for chances to win these awards.

Nonstop RPGA gaming at the Gen Con Game Fair.

D&D Open Championship

The D&D *Open* is the biggest and longest-running D&D tournament ever. Teams of eight players advance through elimination rounds so that the best ten teams reach the finals. The winning team receives a year's supply of Wizards of the Coast roleplaying products, and the second place team wins free product for six months. The D&D *Open* tests your team cooperation, problem solving skills, tactical thinking, and roleplaying abilities. Bring your friends and sign up together, or join a team when you get there. Either way, fame and fortune are waiting for you!

The best DUNGEON MASTER of the D&D *Open* tournament will be honored, as well.

North American Championship

Players of RPGA Classic tournaments have been qualifying all year long for the North American Roleplaying Championship, the pinnacle of competitive roleplaying on this continent. In these Classic tournaments, players voted for the best player, and a winner for the game was declared. The top players, as expressed by their win percentages (number of wins vs. number of games played) were invited to participate in this championship.

The championship consists of all rounds of Classic tournaments at the convention, with the exception of the D&D *Open* and the NASCRAG tournaments. Thus, the competition includes 11 events, and the participants only have to play five events. The player with the top average wins all the glory, including a trophy and a year's supply of Wizards of the Coast roleplaying products!

If you were not part of the championship, but want to see how you would have fared, play at least five Classic event rounds (the D&D *Feature* counts as two rounds) of RPGA events and we'll tally your average and post it. The best-scoring player who is not part of the championship will receive honorable mention at the Awards Ceremony and here in POLYHEDRON, and something nice to take home from behind curtain number three.

We also will be honoring the best game master among those who run at least five Classic tournaments at the convention.

Living Greyhawk Heraldic Shields

LIVING GREYHAWK players are in for a treat! We have three brand-new LIVING GREYHAWK adventures at the show, which will be sure to test your character's wits, combat ability, and survivability. The top four players who play all three events, as measured by average score, get a special prize: a shield emblazoned with the heraldry of a nation in the GREYHAWK campaign. These are nice decorative shields, full size but without the straps required actually to use them. Trust me, you want one of these. The top Dungeon Master who runs at least four Living Greyhawk games also gets to choose a shield!

RPGA HQ staffers Tom Ko and Stephen Radney-MacFarland model the latest in convention prize fashion.

Living Force Han Solo Blasters

Think the shields are cool? How about a replica of Han Solo's blaster from *Star Wars?* The LIVING FORCE campaign presents the *Below the Belt* trilogy, where your Jedi or smuggler or Wookiee pilot can get into more trouble than you can find at Jabba's palace! Play all three adventures in the trilogy, and you become eligible for one of four of these cool replicas. The best LIVING FORCE game masters gets one too! For this event, rounds of the *Below the Belt* trilogy played at the Origins Game Expo count as well. Game masters have to run three rounds of *Below the Belt* events at Gen Con to get into the running.

Get Yourself There!

How can I get in on all this action? I know that's what you're asking yourself. Well, first of all, plan to go to the Safehouse only once during the convention (plus Wednesday after the Members Meeting), as you'll need the rest of the nights for your games. Second, become an RPGA member. Membership is free, and we'll make you a member on the spot at Gen Con; just stop by our HQ in the Arena, second level (there'll be signs directing you). If you're an existing member who paid, you should visit our "Membership Buy-back" booth, where a friendly person will give you a great gift for your previous dedication. (See this month's *News from the Top* for more information.)

Once you're a member, just take your membership number and your event tickets (buy them at the show) and go to the marshal area for your game. The marshal areas are listed on our big schedule signs. A friendly marshal will send you off to a table with some other players. If you want, you can form your own groups in the marshal area and sit together as a group. We recommend that you buy event tickets if they are available, as people with generic tickets (used for extra available spaces) are sent to games last.

For more information on the RPGA events at the show, please visit the RPGA's website (again, that's www.rpga.com); we have a complete schedule and set of descriptions posted. We look forward to seeing you at the show!

Release Roundup

With the mad glory of Gen Con product releases behind them, many d20 System publishers are playing it safe in September and October. Here are some of the most promising products due to release in the sedate early Autumn months.

Alderac Entertainment Group

Fans of AEG's massively popular *Spycraft* modern era espionage RPG have a lot to look forward to in August with the release of the *Soldier/Wheelman Class Guide*, which in addition to containing class options and new rules for soldiers and wheelmen also includes a comprehensive guide to vehicles and vehicle weapons.

All those headlight-concealed rocket launchers and ejection seats will come in handy in October, when AEG releases *Shadowforce Archer Threat Book: The Hand of Glory*, a sourcebook detailing an insidious evil organization with ties to black magic, Nazi Germany, and a living god.

Avalanche Press

At the dawn of the Thirteenth Century, lots of white people decided to kick the butts of lots of non-white people for no particularly good reason.

In *Reconquista: The Battle for Medieval Iberia*, you get to pick whichever side suits your fancy. Lots of death and religious dogma on either side, which is always good for a few laughs. 64 pages of history, feats, prestige classes, assorted magic items, and an adventure, all for $16.95.

Bastion Press

In September, Jim Butler's Bastion Press dives into the fantasy campaign setting pool with *Oathbound: Domains of the Forge*, a 352-page full-color hardcover world book. The setting focuses on the Forge, a planar prison for a long-forgotten god. Former servitors of that god summon the "greatest of the grand" to the Forge for inscrutable purposes that usually involve exploration, combat, and magic. Presumably, that's where the players come in.

Fantasy Flight Games

In October, Fantasy Flight releases the *Monster's Handbook*, eighth in their popular *Legends & Lore* series. *Monster's Handbook* equips DMs with all they need to customize their favorite d20 System beasties with new prestige classes, feats, and templates as well as tips on combining monsters to make for more deadly encounters. The 176-page *Monster's Handbook* retails for $24.95.

Fiery Dragon Productions

Last year gave us so many adventures that most publishers now choose to stay away from them, sticking instead to sourcebooks or campaign settings. Fiery Dragon has consistently produced exemplary adventures, so it's nice to see that September sees the release of *Gates of Oblivion*, a new 32-page fantasy scenario.

Written by Jason Kempton and illustrated by Kieran Yanner, *Gates of Oblivion* sends your heroes to a treacherous prison world filled with hostile outsiders and savages. If they're lucky, they'll find the king's missing son. If they're unlucky, well, imagine *Oz's* Tobias Beecher in a prison filled with monsters and sadistic spellcasters. . . .

Goodman Games

Those gamers who don't have legions of once-beloved plastic dinosaurs rotting away in junkdrawers and musty garages have them sitting on their computer monitors. Make no mistake about it, gamers love them some dinosaurs.

Some also love cowboys, science fiction, and the American Civil War. Mix up all three and you have *Broncosaurus Rex*, by far the most original campaign setting yet to grace the d20 System (and with a list of ingredients like that, it's unlikely they'll see many challengers any time soon).

In October, Goodman goes for the easy slam dunk with the *Complete Guide to T-Rex*, a book

Bolt and Quiver by Stan!

WE'VE DISCOVERED YOUR SECRET, MACE JAQUON! THE TOMB OF DOOM THEME PARK IS NOTHING MORE THAN A FRONT FOR YOUR PLAN TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD!
ACTUALLY, YOU'VE GOT THAT BACKWARDS.
EXCUSE ME?
I ONLY KEEP MY EVIL SCHEMES GOING BECAUSE THEY DRIVE PEOPLE TO MY THEME PARK. I DON'T WANT TO RULE THE WORLD.
Y-YOU DON'T?
OY! SUCH PAPERWORK YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE!
WHAT I WANT IS FOR EVERY DO-GOODER IN THE WORLD TO COME HERE AND PAY 10gp PER DAY TO "RANSACK" MY SANCTUM AND "SAVE THE WORLD" FROM MY TYRANNY.
Stan!
OH... AND TO BUY A T-SHIRT TO HONOR THE OCCASION.
WOULDEST YOU HAVE THAT IN X-TRA LARGE?
EVIL IS AS EVIL DOES!
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you've most likely wanted since you were five. DMs get all sorts of information on T-Rex dynasties of the ancient world, the massive Tyrant Kings, T-Rex psionic abilities (which you probably didn't know about back in the sandbox), and tips on T-Rex tactics. Players get special feats and rules on playing Tyrannosaurus Rex adventurers.

Tyrannosaurus adventurers. Sort of makes a half-orc barbarian look like a garden gnome, eh? Eleven bucks gets you 32 pages of prehistoric fun.

Green Ronin Publishing

In October, Green Ronin Publishing hopes to clobber the growing number of d20 superhero games with their own entry into the genre, Steve Kenson's *Mutants & Masterminds*, a 192-page full-cover hardcover rulebook featuring more than 100 powers, scores of new feats, and a complete adventure to propel players right into the fray. Lavishly illustrated by comic industry professionals, *Mutants & Masterminds* retails for $32.95.

Guardians of Order

Competition in the superhero field is so fierce and developments emerge so quickly that last month we neglected to mention another major player in that field, Guardians of Order, the creators of the popular Tri-Stat system that powers the anime-inspired *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* RPG.

In August, Guardians enters the d20 world with *Silver Age Sentinels: d20 Edition*, a 'port of the Tri-Stat SAS game released in July. Priced at $39.95, the 336-page black and white softcover promises to evoke the themes of Silver Age comic books, so look for lots of heroism, teamwork, and epic struggles of good against evil.

Malhavoc Press

Dungeon Master's Guide author Monte Cook has invited his friend Sean K. Reynolds (GREYHAWK, FORGOTTEN REALMS) to publish original online PDF products through the Malhavoc website (www.montecook.com).

Reynolds's first offerings, *Skreyn's Register: The Bonds of Magic* appears as *Cabal* (October) and *The Faithful*, will eventually be published as a print product by Sword & Sorcery Studios in December. Combined, the product features 50 pregenerated wizards, sorcerers, bards, rangers, clerics, druids, rangers, and paladins, each with full statistics, an illustration, and a unique spell, magic item, or feat. Prices were unavailable at press time but should be online by the time you read this.

Mongoose Publishing

In October and September, Mongoose Publishing will put out as many products as most of the companies mentioned in the Release Roundup combined. Highlights include *The Quintessential Witch*, The *Quintessential Psychic Warrior*, *The Slayer's Guide to Duergar* (!), and an *Encyclopedia Arcane* supplement entitled *Star Magic: Wisdom of the Magi*, as well as several supplements for their *Judge Dredd* and *Slaine 2000 AD* licensed d20 RPGs.

Necromancer Games

October's release of W.D.B. Kenower's *The Vault of Larin Karr* signals a change in Necromancer's adventure publishing strategy. The 96-page accessory is more than just a huge adventure, it's what publisher Clark Peterson calls a "mini-campaign." The book details a valley, three villages therein, and a massive Underdark chamber reminiscent of the legendary *Vault of the Drow*. The adventure takes PCs from 4th to 9th level, and retails for $14.95.

Paradigm Concepts

In September, Paradigm Concepts (sponsor of the RPGA's LIVING ARCANIS campaign) releases the first in its OGL Interlink series (in association with Green Ronin Publishing). *The Lords of the Peaks: An Essential Guide to Giants*, compliments Green Ronin's *Hammer & Helm: A Guidebook to Dwarves*, which hit stores in July. *Lords of the Peaks* features treatments of the various giant subraces as well as the usual assembly of feats, spells, and prestige classes. It retails for $18.99.

Bolt and Quiver by Stan!

AS THERE'S NAUGHT HERE MORE EVIL THAN OVER-PRICED TOURIST BRIC-A-BRAC, WE'LL JUST TAKE OUR LEAVE....
THERE IS ONE MORE THING.
YOUR ANTICS PUT THE ACTOR PLAYING GARY GOBLIN IN THE HOSPITAL. IF I DON'T HAVE SOMEONE PRESSING THE FLESH I'LL NEVER MOVE ANY MERCHANDISE... AND I'LL BE OUT OF BUSINESS!
HI KIDS! I'M GARY JUNIOR!
MY DADDY SAYS YOU'RE NOT A REAL GOBLIN
WHAT A DORK
SHOOT ME ...PLEASE
I GOTTA PEE!
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Company Profile: Necromancer Games

Though Green Ronin and Atlas had the first in-print d20 System products at Gen Con 2000, Necromancer Games president Clark Peterson likes to brag that his company was the first to release a product in any form, pointing to The Wizard's Amulet, *a free PDF download that debuted on Necromancer's site at Midnight on the first morning that the d20 System went live.*

Since that historic moment, Peterson has been a key player in the d20 System industry, teaming with White Wolf to become the first partner in the now apparently unstoppable Sword & Sorcery Studios imprint (which also includes Monte Cook's Malhavoc Press and White Wolf's own Scarred Lands *campaign setting).*

One reason Necromancer was able to carve out such a strong niche for itself has been a dedication to the simple motto of "Third Edition rules, First Edition feel."

To back that up, Peterson has recruited D&D pioneers Gary Gygax and Rob Kuntz. He's licensed the popular Grimtooth's Traps *series formerly published by Flying Buffalo. As this issue of* Polyhedron *went to press, Necromancer announced that they have acquired an expansive license to produce Third Edition revisions and new material for virtually the entire fantasy catalogue of Judges Guild, an independent publisher that was making third-party D&D products more than 20 years before the birth of the d20 System License.*

Understandably, Clark Peterson has a lot to say.

POLY: ***What do you mean, specifically, by "First Edition feel?"***
PETERSON: "First Edition feel" doesn't mean the First Edition rules, it means a way of playing Dungeons & Dragons. It refers more to the sources and the inspirations for the game. I've answered that question before, and I answered by giving a list of things that to me epitomize "First Edition feel": it's the cover of the old *DMG* with the City of Brass and the efreet; it's Judges Guild; it's Type IV demons, not Tanar'ri and Baatezu; it's the *Vault of the Drow,* not Drizzt Do'Urden; the *Tomb of Horrors,* not the *Ruins of Myth Drannor*; it's orcs, not ogrillons; it's mind flayers, not Ilithids; it's Tolkien, Moorcock, Howard, and Lieber, not Eddings, Hickman, Jordan, and Salavatore; it is definitely Orcus and the demon-princes, and it is artifacts and relics from the old *DMG* (with all the cool descriptions). Most of all, perhaps, is that it's the concept of truly heroic and epic roleplaying and the idea of telling a story first and worrying about rules second.

POLY: ***In what ways do the d20 System rules work against the concept of "First Edition feel," and how have you managed to work against (or with) that?***
PETERSON: That's a great question. To me, First Edition feel is all about flexibility and storytelling over game mechanics. I hate rules lawyering. So the fact that 3E has a rule for everything is a burden. I prefer the days when I just said, "roll a six sided die." Now there is a mechanic. And now that the monsters have become so common and well-described, people get upset if they are different. I hate that. The monsters in my campaign are unique, for the most part.

Here's a favorite gripe: "Iron golems don't use swords, they have slam attacks!" A player actually said that when one of my iron golems swung its magical greatsword at him. Too often the mechanics and the game conventions control the story you tell. That is bad. That is not "First Edition feel," to me. In my opinion, the story controls the mechanic.

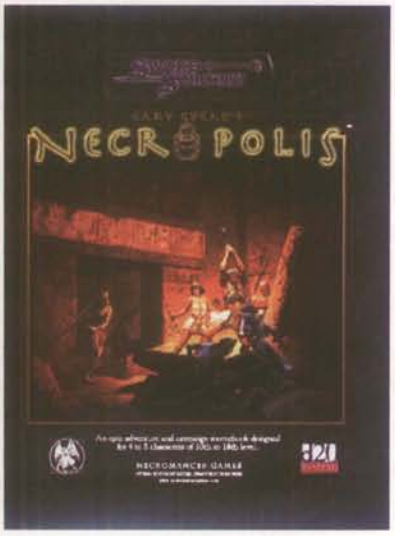
Guess what? If I want the iron golem to have a sword, he has a sword. And I'm certainly not going to be bound by what the *MM* says is the advancement for the monster. I will make them how I want. Third Edition, with all its rules, can constrain a DM if they let it.

Another thing that is an example of rules dictating play is all the movement detail in combat. That threatens to make D&D a board game. Anyone who played in any of my demos at Gen Con knows that the first thing I do (after I explain a house rule called "the death penalty") is to explain that the grid on the Battlemat is for reference and to measure distance. I don't want people moving on the mat like a chessboard. This is roleplaying, not Monopoly. Don't hop your minis across the Battlemat like you're playing checkers.

That isn't to say I don't love Third Edition—I do. I actually like the d20 mechanic. I just try to remind people not to let the rules run story, but rather to let the story run the rules. That is "First Edition," to me. Hopefully our adventures bring back some of that creativity and uniqueness.

POLY: ***What can we expect from Necromancer and Rob Kuntz and Gary Gygax? Why did you gravitate toward these creators?***
PETERSON: We are very excited about doing Gygax's *Necropolis.* That thing is an unbelievable adventure (over 150 pages), plus a ton of additional campaign material. Obviously, we are also doing Rob's *Maze* series.

With our focus being on "First Edition feel," we tried to reach out to some of the original creators. I have always really wanted to bring the City of Brass to life ever since I saw that old *DMG* cover. That's what led me to Rob. He was very interested in doing *Brass* and redoing *Maze* for Third Edition [the original four modules were published as unofficial First Edition adventures by Rob's Creations Unlimited in the 1980s—Ed.].



Necropolis, *which originally appeared as a* Dangerous Journeys *adventure, makes its d20 debut at Gen Con.*

As for Gary, *Tomb of Horrors* has long been my partner Bill Webb's favorite module. I am a huge fan of the *Against the Giants* and *Descent into the Depths of the Earth* series, as well as *The Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth*. So getting *Necropolis*—which Bill describes as "*Tomb of Horrors* on crack"—was great for us.

POLY: ***Are there any other "great old ones" you'd like to be working with?***
PETERSON: My dream would be to do a Gary Gygax project with Dave Trampier doing all the art. There is no artist that better captures what I consider to be that original "First Edition feel." Crack open the old *Monster Manual* and check out the minotaur. Better yet, get an old *DMG* and find the picture of Emirikol the Chaotic in the back. Truly awesome! I would love to have a Necromancer product with Trampier art. I've tried to contact him, but I guess he is completely in isolation these days and wants nothing to do with gaming. Mr. Trampier, if you are reading this, please contact me!

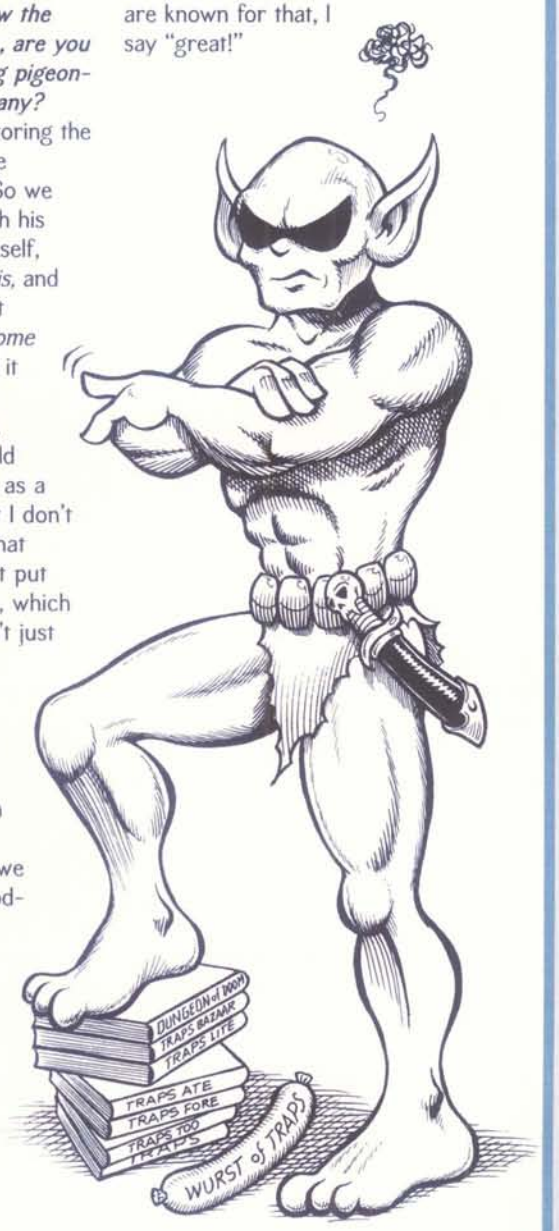
POLY: ***Why Grimtooth?***
PETERSON: I always loved the lighthearted humor of the original *Grimtooth's Traps* series. It was fun evil. It let you be deadly with a smile on your face. I like that concept. I guess that's why we have a demon prince as our corporate mascot. Sometimes roleplaying can get a little serious and stuffy, like all the "pure roleplayers" who would never be caught dead actually having a good melee weapon, but have maxed-out Diplomacy and Craft skills. Sometimes we have to remember this is all a game and it was meant to be fun. Grimtooth, if nothing else, is certainly fun. Besides, I remember flipping through those books in the store when I was a kid saying "I gotta have this, this is great!"

POLY: ***With the revisions of* Maze of Zayene, Necropolis, *and now the* Wurst of Grimtooth's Traps, *are you at all concerned about being pigeonholed as a "revision" company?***
PETERSON: Not really. Restoring the First Edition feel to the game requires a link to the past. So we brought back Rob Kuntz with his *Maze* series, the master himself, Gary Gygax, with *Necropolis*, and we're restoring the lost First Edition monsters with the *Tome of Horrors*. I guess I look at it more as filling a hole in the current edition of the game.

The main problem I would have with being thought of as a "revisions" company is that I don't like the word "revisions." That makes it sound like we don't put any work into the products, which certainly isn't true. We don't just take the old products and slap a d20 appendix in them with conversions to the new rules. We take the time to revisit and change them and to add new, fresh content.

Besides, while it is true we have a few high profile products that are "revisions," the vast majority of our products are new adventures made for the Third Edition rules: *Crucible of Freya, Rappan Athuk, Tomb of Abysthor, What Evil Lurks, Durgam's Folly, Demons and Devils,* and our upcoming products like *Vault of Larin Karr, Bard's Gate, Grey Citadel, Chaos Rising* and the other 20 or so products we have in production. All those are entirely new content.

But to answer your question: No, I don't really worry about that. Bringing back the classics is one of the pigeon holes I want to be in. I think of us—and I believe our fans think of us—as a company that has been lucky enough to get the rights to some really great products. Products that Bill and I loved years ago and still use today. Products we are excited to bring to a new generation of gamers. If we are known for that, I say "great!"



Stop that Monkey!

Orangutan Characters in *Thunderball Rally*

by Rich Redman

Ma Boggs: "What are ya gonna do with the baboon?"
Philo Beddoe: "Orangutan, Ma, Clyde's an orangutan."
Ma Boggs: "What's the difference?"
Philo: "Twelve ribs, just like you and me."
—*Every Which Way But Loose*

You've seen *Every Which Way But Loose*, *Any Which Way You Can*, and even *Cannonball Run II*. You saw the movie poster featured in last issue's *Thunderball Rally* Mini-Game, and you want to play an orangutan. We don't blame you. We do, too.

Orangutan characters use most of the same rules as other racers, and the other rules presented here create the kinds of super-clever apes you expect to see in *Thunderball Rally*.

Orangutan Abilities

Roll your ability scores normally, then apply the following modifiers: +4 Strength, +4 Dexterity, +2 Constitution, -6 Intelligence, +2 Wisdom, and -4 Charisma. In addition, orangutans have low-light vision and scent (See the *Player's Handbook* and *Monster Manual*, respectively).

Intelligence

Orangutan characters do not need to be taught tricks. They are as smart as their Intelligence score indicates. A GM may insist on an Intelligence check to figure out something the orangutan racer has never seen before, but they're more like characters and less like animals.

Language

When you play an orangutan, feel free to communicate through exaggerated facial expressions, gestures, and ape noises. These do not translate well over CB radios, of course, so orangutans cannot use any class abilities dependent on radios.

Orangutans start the game speaking and reading no languages, but they can understand simple, spoken English. They may spend 2 skill points to gain fluency in a sign language, and can then communicate through signing. They cannot read. A GM may insist on an Intelligence check if another racer tries to communicate something complicated or abstract to an orangutan.

Combat

Orangutans have a +3 Base Attack Bonus before adding any class levels. Orangutans have sharp fingernails they can use as claws, and powerful bites. An orangutan can make either a claw or bite melee attack using its full melee attack bonus. If it can make a full attack action, it can attack with both a claw and a bite, but the bite attack is at -5.

Orangutan claws and bites both do 1d6 points of damage, plus Strength bonus. If an orangutan attacks with only its claws, it adds one and a half times its Strength bonus to the damage of any successful hits.

Wealth

Orangutans never accumulate wealth. They're completely dependent on other racers for food, shelter, care, and a vehicle. Of course, you don't want to ride across the United States with a few hundred pounds of primate pissed off because you drank the last beer...

Classes

Orangutans use most of the *Thunderball Rally* rules for character classes, with the following changes:

Level Adjustment: Orangutans have a +0 level adjustment. That means that their Effective Character Level is 4th (since they start with 4 Hit Dice). For more on level adjustments and ECLs, see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. A starting ECL of 4 also means that:

Orangutans do not multiply the skill points they gain from their first class level by 4. All orangutan racers have 5 ranks in Climb, 5 ranks in Listen, and 5 ranks in Spot before gaining a class level.

An orangutan racer uses Table 1-1: Experience and Level-Dependent Benefits differently than other racers. With one class level, an orangutan racer is ECL 5, so to gain another class level they need 15,000 experience points, just like any other 5th-level character.

Orangutan racers start with no feats, and do not gain any until they gain 2 class levels, when they are ECL 6.

Orangutan racers do not gain an ability score increase until they gain 4 class levels, when they are ECL 8.

Hit Points: Orangutans start out with 4d8 hit points. They apply any Constitution bonus to each Hit Die.

Action Points: Orangutans gain action points for their class levels, but do not start with any for being orangutans.

Class Skills: Climb, Listen, and Spot are always class skills for orangutans. Orangutans can never take ranks in Craft, Demolitions, Disable Device, or Repair. GMs should carefully review any ranks in Profession taken by orangutan racers.

Skill points in *Thunderball Rally* assume human racers. Orangutan Aces and Bodyguards get 4 + Int. modifier skill points per level.

Classes: Orangutans never have levels in Navigator. They may have levels in either Ace or Bodyguard. They never suffer experience point penalties for multiclassing.

Tom Fowler

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This POLYHEDRON **d20 System** Mini-Game requires the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and *Monster Manual* to play. POLYHEDRON Mini-Games adapt the standard D&D rules and conventions to nonstandard settings and genres. Unless specifically noted in the text, this Mini-Game follows the core D&D rules. If you know how to play DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, you'll pick up the rules of this game in moments.

Omega World utilizes game mechanics developed for the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison and is based on the original GAMMA WORLD *Roleplaying Game* by Jim Ward and Gary Jaquet (with additional material in later years by David James Ritchie and others). This Wizards of the Coast game contains no Open Game Content.

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.

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#00131

PUDDNHEAD

IF YOUR LITTLE BAND OF EXPLORERS CAN SURVIVE THE TOXIC SWAMPS AND RADIOACTIVE WINDS, YOU WILL REACH THE FABLED LANDS BEYOND THE WASTELANDS. BASED ON STORIES YOU'VE HEARD FROM OTHER EXPLORERS, YOU KNOW YOU COULD FIND RADIOACTIVE RUINS FROM BEFORE THE BOMB, MUTANT CANNIBAL TRIBES, HOMICIDAL ROBOTS, AND NIGHTMARISH PREDATORS. IF YOU CAN ALSO FIND SOME RELICS MIGHTY WEAPONS AND TOOLS OF THE ANCIENTS GREAT POWER CAN BE YOURS.

JUMP IN THE FIRE

You come from a settlement of a few hundred souls—mutated humans, pure strain humans, and mutated animals. Somewhere in a pocket of fertile ground, surrounded by toxic and radioactive wastelands, your people scrape together a life. You hide from the deathbots, trade with nomadic mutants, and tend modest crops.

The elders have told you stories about the Golden Age, when people—called the Ancients—didn't have to work because the machines were their slaves and did all the work for them. All the people had plenty of food. They had boats that flew and took them to the stars. They even had special machines to pick the fleas and ticks off themselves, so nobody ever itched, or so the stories go. But then the Golden Age ended in fire hotter than fire.

The machines started the war, wayward creations that rose up against their creators, rebels who destroyed those who had given them minds and electronic life.

Or maybe the beasts started it, animals that science had given human-like forms, human-like minds, and human-like hatreds.

Others say it was the cryptic alliances, shadowy societies shrouded in secret and bent on controlling the world.

Then again, it could have been the androids, perfect people seeking to erase those who were less than perfect.

Or was it just people, humans unworthy of the Golden Age, unworthy of peace, who destroyed their own planet and left ash and slag for the freaks and the robots to fight over?

Many say they know the answers, but few agree on what they are.

What they can agree on is the present, a world of mutants, poisons, and rampaging machines. Into this world you have been born. Now is the time for you to make your place in it.

Somewhere, on the other side of the wastelands, are ruins where mighty relics lie. These weapons of the Ancients can make you a warlord, a conqueror, or a hero, if you can find them and use them. Roaming across the land are tribes of savages. They'll eat you if they can, but they may fear and serve you if you are strong. Here and there are other settlements of decent folk who may welcome you if you bring news and goods to trade. And somewhere are the mortal enemies of all sentient life, which you must defeat, if you can only figure out who they are.

OMEGA WORLD SUMMARY

Omega World is a high-action **d20 System** RPG in a world devastated by global warfare and overrun by mutants. It features weird powers, strange monsters, insane NPCs, and big guns. It's "high flux," with the promise of great rewards and the constant threat of pointless demise.

Omega World is meant to offer a different roleplaying experience than that presented in the core Dungeons & Dragons game. It's more random and less balanced. It's meant to be a lot of fun to play for a little while, but it's not designed to hold up as an indefinitely long campaign. Still, it is designed to have lots of good and bad things happen to the PCs in even a few sessions.

On another level, *Omega World* is a lot like D&D. The PC party treks through the wilderness and explores ruins, fighting monsters and looking for treasure. You can have fun, at least for a while, just by following the fight-loot-repeat cycle. If you know how to set up a D&D adventure, you can create an *Omega World* adventure, too.

Omega World PCs advance quickly, gaining XP and relics to make them more powerful. But they also die at a relatively high rate. Rolling up your next character, however, is fun and fast, so don't worry too much about the high kill rate.

Omega World PCs aren't terribly balanced. You can get lucky and have good mutations that work together, and you can get unlucky and wind up with no mutations to get excited about. For a short campaign with a high death rate, this imbalance is part of the fun.

The science in *Omega World* sucks. This is a game about big, crazy powers and big, crazy guns, not about genetics or physics.

HOW IS IT DIFFERENT?

Omega World rules vary in several basic ways from standard d20.

MUTATIONS AND DEFECTS

Most characters (and monsters) have mutations and defects. These are the chief way that PCs are differentiated from each other, and you get them randomly.

STARTING LEVEL

PCs start at 4th level so that they are powerful enough to fight cool monsters right out of the gate. Most PCs, however, are mutants, with an effective level 1 or 2 levels higher than actual level. They start out at 2nd or 3rd level but are treated as 4th-level characters in terms of XP.

EXPLORER CLASS

All PCs are the same class—explorer. The explorer is sort of a souped-up expert. It has no unique class features because *Omega World* is about your mutations and your guns, not about your class.

RESERVES

Since there's precious little healing in *Omega World* (and a fair bit of damage), the rules introduce "reserves." Reserves are your character's ability to recover quickly from wounds.

TREASURE AND WEALTH

Finding treasure is a big part of *Omega World*, but treasure doesn't have a standard price or value. There's no stable economic system in which prices can attach to goods. PCs will have to barter if they want to exchange goods with NPCs.

ANTHONY WATERS

CHAPTER 1 CHARACTERS

YOU PLAY AN "EXPLORER." EXPLORERS MIGHT BE PURE STRAIN HUMANS, MUTATED HUMANS, OR MUTATED ANIMALS. THEY BEGIN THEIR CAREERS WITH RUDIMENTARY GEAR AND RUDIMENTARY KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD. IF THEY'RE LUCKY, THEY GAIN EXPERIENCE, POWER, KNOWLEDGE, AND HIGH-TECH "RELICS." IF THEY'RE UNLUCKY THEY GET BLASTED TO NOTHINGNESS BY TORC GRENADES OR HAVE THEIR LEGS CHEWED OFF BY GIANT LADYBUGS.

CHARACTER BACKGROUND

While each explorer's life story is unique, you can figure that the typical explorer. . .

. . . grew up in a stable tribe or village, but left that community behind (often because it got nuked by rampaging supremacist deathbots).

. . . has heard stories about the Golden Age before the Bomb and knows that we all live in an age of suffering and destruction.

. . . has heard stories of armies of robots out to kill all living things, of peaceful lands where people of all kinds live together in harmony and prosperity, and of hidden relics that will give whoever finds them godlike power.

. . . knows what a gun is and generally how it works but has never fired one.

. . . can't read or write, but understands that the Ancients captured their speech in mysterious marks that some people today can still decipher.

. . . knows vaguely what's north, south, east, and west of wherever the campaign starts.

. . . thinks the world is flat and that the stars are little lights way up in the air.

. . . has occasionally met strange and wonderful travelers from distant lands.

Your GM may have a special campaign starting point that changes these defaults.

CREATING A CHARACTER

1. Choose to be either a pure-strain human or a mutant (of random mutant stock).
2. If you're a mutant, roll for your mutant stock (Table 1–1).
3. If you're a mutant, roll on Table 1-3: Random Mutations until:
   a. You don't want to roll anymore, or
   b. The total value of your mutations exceeds 10.
4. If you have any mutations, roll on Table 1-4: Random Defects until the total value of your defects exceeds the total value of your mutations.

TABLE 1-1: RANDOM MUTANT STOCK

d%	Mutant Stock	ECL	Starting Class Level
01-35	Human	+1	3rd
36-60	Hairy	+2	2nd
61-80	Clicky	+2	2nd
81-100	Scaly	+2	2nd

ECL: Effective character level. For purposes of XP, the mutant is 1 or 2 levels above its actual level.

TABLE 1-2: MUTANT STOCK STATISTICS

	Mutated Human	Clicky	Hairy	Scaly
Abilities	Normal	-2 Dex +6 Con -4 Int -4 Cha	+2 Dex +2 Con -2 Int	+2 Str -2 Int -2 Cha
Speed	30 ft.	30 ft. Climb 5 ft.	40 ft.	30 ft.
Size	Medium-size	Medium-size	Medium-size	Medium-size
Stock Mutations	None	Exoskeleton Scent Tremorsense	Fur Low-light vision	Claws Scales Tail
Random Stock Mutations	01-40 Brain Bite 41-70 Force Field 71-100 Energy Drain	01-40 Heightened Intelligence 41-70 Poison Bite 71-100 Blindsight	01-40 Rage 41-70 Great Reserves 71-100 Haste Self	01-30 Poison Bite 31-60 Regeneration 61-80 Chameleon Skin 81-100 Immunity–Poison
Stock Defect	Smaller	Crude Hands	Heightened Metabolism	Poor Respiratory System
ECL	+1	+2	+2	+2
Starting Class Level	3rd	2nd	2nd	2nd

CHARISMA AS PSYCHE

In *Omega World*, think of Charisma as "Psyche." It represents the character's inner power. That's why psychic attacks are based on it.

5. Roll abilities (organic method from the *DMG*). Add +1 to one ability score if you're a pure strain human (because your character level is 4).
6. Determine skills, feats, and hit points, as a 4th-level character with the explorer class (see page 28).
7. Choose basic gear and roll for special gear.

CHARACTER STOCK

For your character's stock ("race"), choose either to be a pure-strain human or to roll on Table 1-1: Random Mutant Stock. Stock traits for mutants are summarized on Table 1-2: Mutant Stock Statistics.

Unless defects prevent it, a mutated human, clicky, hairy, or scaly can use gear as a human can.

PURE-STRAIN HUMAN

These are humans as we know and love them, without mutations or defects. Pure-strain humans don't have the advantageous mutations of the mutants, but they are adept with high-tech devices.

In addition to their standard benefits of being a human (bonus feat and bonus skill points), a pure-strain human can take tech skills as class skills.

Pure-strain humans (along with mutated humans) are smarter than clickies, hairies, and scalies.

Pure-strain humans represent the ideal human form, and mutants regard them with awe and envy. At least that's what pure strain humans tell themselves.

For reasons lost in the mists of history, pure-strain males are known as "adams" and females are known as "eves."

MUTATED HUMAN

Mutated humans are more or less human-looking, depending on their mutations. Some regard the pure-strain human form as an ideal, while others reject it as outdated.

Mutated humans do not have the standard human benefits.

Mutated humans (along with pure-strain humans) are smarter than clickies, hairies, and scalies.

Some mutated humans regard themselves as the next step in human evolution, and figure it's only a matter of time until people like them are the new dominant species across the globe.

CLICKY

"Clickies" are mutated, vaguely humanoid arthropods, mostly beetles (because arthropods are mostly beetles). Clickies do not have strong social instincts, but they work with each other and with other creatures for practical reasons. Others trust them, figuring they're too stupid to trick anyone.

Their larvae are not sentient.

TABLE 1-3: RANDOM MUTATIONS

d%	Mutation	Summary	Value
1	Amazing Fortitude	+10 on Fortitude saving throws	1
2	Amazing Reflex	+10 on Reflex saving throws	1
3	Amazing Will	+10 on Will saving throws	1
4	Blindsense	Pinpoint (but don't "see") creatures within 30 ft.	1
5	Chameleon Skin	+20 Hide (when not wearing armor)	1
6	Climbing Hooks	10 ft. climb speed	1
7	Double Healing	Recover from damage at double speed	1
8	Fleet Feet	+10 ft. Speed	1
9	Immunity Poison	Immune to poison	1
10	Immunity Psychic	Immune to psychic effects	1
11	Keen Ears	+20 Listen	1
12	Keen Eyes	+20 Spot	1
13	Keen Nose	Scent	1
14	Low-light Vision	Low-light vision	1
15	Padded Feet	+10 Move Silently	1
16	Resist Radiation	Negate 12 radiation damage per day	1
17	Swimmer	5 ft. swim	1
18	Tail	+4 Balance, Jump, Swim	1
19	Tentacles	Improved Grab	1
20	Tremorsense	30 ft.	1
21	Uncanny Dodge	As 5th-level barbarian	1
22	Blindsight	10 ft.	2
23–24	Claws	Natural weapon, counts as armed, 1d6 damage	2
25	Darkvision	60 ft.	2
26	Dual Brain	+2 Int, Wis, Cha; two Will saves	2
27	Empathy	Sense others' feelings	2
28–29	Fur	+2 natural armor, cold resistance 5	2
30–31	Horns	2d4 damage, double damage on a charge	2
32	Leech Damage	Touch, remove 1d6 damage from target creature and suffer that much damage yourself	2
33	Overpowering Stench	Adjacent creatures suffer -2 attacks, checks	2
34	Quills	Extra attack (no penalty) for 1d6 damage when grappling	2
35	Spring Legs	+10 ft. Speed, +30 Jump	2
36	Tougher	+2 hp/HD	2
38	Acidic Bite	1d6 bite + 1d6 acid	3
39	Carapace	+ 6 natural armor, -2 Dex	3
40	Great Reserves	Reserves = double hit points (instead of = hit points)	3
41	Haste Self	6 rounds/day	3
42	Heightened Charisma	+10 to Charisma	3
43	Heightened Intelligence	+10 to Intelligence	3
44–45	Pincers	2 pincers, 1d6 damage, hit with both = bonus damage	3
46–47	Regeneration	Convert 5 reserve points to hit points each round as an automatic action	3
48–49	Scales	+3 natural armor	3
50	Shaper	*Alter self*, 10 minutes, does not affect clothing, etc.; 1/day	3
51	Telepathy	Read and speak to others' minds	3
52	Force Field	10 points	4
53	Heightened Wisdom	+10 to Wisdom	4
54–55	Light Warp	Disturb light (as *blur*) for 5 rounds, 3/day	4
56–57	Lightning Touch	Touch attack for 6d6 electrical damage, once per day	4
58	Psychic Double	You're comatose, your double is incorporeal, 10 minutes, 1/day	4
59–60	Psychic Healing	Cure 2d6, 6d6/day	4
61–62	Rage	Barbarian rage, 1/day	4
63	Dimension Slip	Go ethereal for 6 rounds, 1/day	5
64	Extra Arm	1 extra one-handed attack (no penalty) or shield	5
65	Levitate Self	Self only, 3/day	5
66–67	Poison Bite	1d6 damage + poison	5
68–69	Telekinesis	As spell, caster level 5, 3/day	5

TABLE 1-3: RANDOM MUTATIONS (CONTINUED)

d%	Mutation	Summary	Value
70	Time Slip	Disappear for up to 5 rounds, then two of you appear for that many rounds, at the end of which one of them (randomly) disappears	5
71	Wings	6 rounds per hour	5
72–73	Brain Bite	Psychic attack vs. Will, 2d4 damage, close range	6
74–75	Cryogenesis	Psychic attack vs. Will, 1d6 cold damage	6
76	Displacement	As spell, 5 rounds, 3/day	6
77	Exoskeleton	+5 natural armor	6
78	Heightened Constitution	+10 to Constitution	6
79	Heightened Dexterity	+10 to Dexterity	6
80	Heightened Strength	+10 to Strength	6
81	Life Leech	Deal 1d6 damage to all within 30 ft., gain that damage as temporary hit points, 1/day	6
82–83	Bigger	1 size category	7
84–85	Energy Drain	Energy drain, touch, psychic attack vs. Will save, gain 5 hp/success, 6/day	7
86	Leech Strength	Touch attack, deal 1d4 points of Strength damage and gain a bonus to your own Strength (but multiple boosts don't stack)	7
87	Extra Arms	1 extra two-handed attack or 1 extra one-handed attack + shield	8
88	Light Slip	Invisible for 5 rounds, 1/day	8
89–90	Sonic Blast	30 ft. cone, 1d6 sonic damage, no save	8
91–100	Stock Mutation	See Table 1-2: Mutant Stock Statistics	–

HAIRY

"Hairies" are mutated, humanoid mammals, such as bears, dogs, wolves, raccoons, and cats. Some love being part of a "pack," while others are loners.

SCALY

"Scalies" are mutated, humanoid reptiles, mostly lizards. Their social instincts are weak, but they can learn to have affection for companions who are good to them.

MUTATIONS

To determine a mutant's mutations, roll d% on Table 1–3: Random Mutations. Each mutation has a value. If the total value of all the mutations you've rolled so far is 10 or less, you can roll for another mutation, or stop rolling mutations and move on. If the total value of all the mutations you've already rolled is 11 or more, you have to stop rolling mutations. When you stop, move on to Table 1–4: Random Defects.

In general, mutations stack, so you can have fur (+2 natural armor) over your exoskeleton (+5 natural armor) for +7 natural armor. Lucky mutant. But the GM can limit or disallow abusive stacking. If you rolled Acidic Bite twice in my campaign, I'd double the acid damage but I'd only increase the bite damage one "size step," from 1d6 to 2d4.

Most activated special abilities, such as Light Slip, are free actions.

LIMITED USES PER DAY

If a mutation has a limited number of uses (or dice) per day, the ability to use the mutation returns over 24 hours. Each use (or die) returns in a fraction of 24 hours.

For example, a mutant has Psychic Healing (6 dice/day), and uses the Superior Mutation feat to raise its capacity to 7 dice/day. If the mutant uses up some of its healing capacity, the capacity returns at the rate of 7/24 of a die each hour (1 die in 4 hours, a second die after 3 more hours, etc.).

VARYING VALUES

GMs should feel free to vary the values of the mutations and defects to fit how powerful they are in their campaigns. Different GM styles and house rules can make them more or less powerful. For example, Telepathy is great in a political campaign but sucks in a campaign about a climactic war against silicon life.

DAMAGE AND SIZE

Damage for attacks varies with size. This is true for physical and mental attacks. A mutant rat (Tiny) with Brain Bite, for example, only deals 1d4 damage with it instead of the standard 2d4.

MUTATION DESCRIPTIONS

Mutations are listed in alphabetical order.

Acidic Bite

Natural weapon deals 1d6 damage + 1d6 acid damage. The character can bite in addition to making other attacks, but in that case all attacks for the round are at -2.

Feat: +1 acid damage, repeatable
Value: 3

Amazing SAVE

+10 on saves of the listed type.

Feat: +2 save, repeatable
Value: 1

Bigger

The mutant is one size category larger. For a Medium-size creature, apply these bonuses: +8 Str, -2 Dex, +4 Con, +2

natural armor, -1 size modifier to AC and attack bonuses. For other sizes, see the *Monster Manual*.

Mutations that have damage dice and other dice related to hit points are increased. Use the damages listed for weapons of different sizes on Table 1-8: Omega Weapons to determine how the dice increase. For example, Psychic Healing heals 2d6 damage. For a Large mutant, it would heal 3d6 damage. (You can see on Table 1-8 that 3d6 is one step above 2d6.)

The mutant's speed goes up. If the mutant also has mutations or defects that affect its speed, apply those modifications before adjusting the speed for being bigger.

Base Speed	New Speed	Encumbered Speed
20 ft.	30 ft.	20 ft.
30 ft.	45 ft.	30 ft.
40 ft.	60 ft.	40 ft.

The mutant can use bigger weapons, as normal for a creature of its new size.

Feat: –
Value: 7

Blindsense

Like a weak form of blindsight, Blindsense lets a mutant know the locations of creatures within 30 ft. regardless of darkness, fog, invisibility, etc. (though it's blocked by solid obstacles).

Feat: +30 ft. range
Value: 1

Blindsight

Blindsight, 10 ft. range.

Feat: +10 ft. range
Value: 2

Brain Bite [Psychic]

As a standard action, the mutant projects harmful psychic energy into the brain of its target. The "brain bite" deals 2d4 damage to a nearby living creature. Range: 30 ft. The target's Will save (versus the mutant's Psychic Attack check) negates.

Uses: 1/round
Feat: +1 damage
Value: 6

Carapace

+6 natural armor, -2 Dex.

Feat: –
Value: 3

Chameleon Skin

+20 Hide when not wearing armor or more than a little clothing.

Feat: +2 Hide, repeatable
Value: 1

Claws

Each claw deals 1d6 damage, and the character can flurry as a monk when attacking with them. The claws are natural weapons, so the character is always considered armed.

Feat: –
Value: 2

Climbing Hooks

The mutant has hooks that make climbing certain, if not fast. It has a climb speed of 10 ft. (or +10 ft., if it already has a climb speed). See climb speed in the *Monster Manual*. The mutant's free Climb ranks are 1/Hit Die.

Feat: +5 ft. climb speed (not more than normal speed)
Value: 1

Cryogenesis [Psychic]

As a standard action, the mutant psychically slows the molecules in a small space, about the size of a soccer ball. Used as an attack, it deals 1d6 damage. Range: 30 ft. The target's Will save (versus the mutant's Psychic Attack check) negates.

Uses: 1/round
Feat: +1 damage
Value: 6

Darkvision

Darkvision, 60 ft. range.

Feat: +20 ft. range
Value: 2

Dimension Slip

As a free action, the mutant can become ethereal (as with *ethereal jaunt*). The state lasts up to 6 rounds and can be dismissed as a free action.

Uses: 6 rounds/day
Feat: +2 rounds/day, repeatable
Value: 5

Displacement

As *displacement* spell, activate as a free action, lasts 5 rounds.

Uses: 3/day
Feat: +1 use/day, repeatable
Value: 6

Double Healing

The mutant's healing rate is double normal: four times its Hit Dice per day.

Feat: +4 points healed per day
Value: 1

Dual Brain

The mutant has a second brain (but not necessarily a second head). It gets +2 Int, +2 Wis, and +2 Cha. It gets two Will saves when it would normally get one, and it uses the better result. (A 1 on a single such save is not automatically a failure, but a 1 on both is.)

Feat: –
Value: 2

Empathy [Psychic]

The mutant can sense others' brain waves within 30 ft., picking up the presence of minds and their basic emotional states (but not their thoughts). Using the mutation is automatic.

Feat: +10 ft. range, repeatable
Value: 2

Energy Drain [Psychic]

The mutant drains the life energy from those it touches. This

touch attack is equivalent to an undead energy drain, draining 1 level with each attack. The mutant gains 5 temporary hit points per successful drain.

The victim's Will save (versus the mutant's Psychic Attack check) negates.

Remember: The temporary hit points from energy drain stack with each other.

Some people say that a person completely drained of life dies but then returns from the grave as an "undead" creature, itself capable of draining life from other living things. Of course, you can't believe everything you hear.

Uses: 6/day
Feat: +1 use per day
Value: 7

Exoskeleton

+5 natural armor.
Feat: –
Value: 6

Extra Arm

Each round, the mutant gets one extra one-handed attack. Alternatively, it can use a shield in that extra hand, for an extra shield bonus to AC.
Feat: –
Value: 5

Extra Arms

Each round, the mutant gets either one extra two-handed attack or an extra one-handed attack plus the ability to use an extra shield.
Feat: –
Value: 8

Fleet Feet

+10 ft. base speed.

If the mutant is larger or smaller than Medium-size, add the +10 ft. before applying the proportion for size category.
Feat: –
Value: 1

Force Field [Psychic]

The mutant can generate a 10-point force field around its body. The mutant must be conscious for the force field to be active.

If the mutant is smaller or larger than Medium-size, its force field strength is different (as is standard for mutations that have to do with hit points and damage).

Fine	2 points
Diminutive	3 points
Tiny	5 points
Small	7 points
Medium-size	10 points
Large	15 points
Huge	20 points
Gargantuan	30 points
Colossal	40 points

See Force Fields in Chapter 2: Combat.
Feat: +2 points, repeatable
Value: 4

Fur

+2 natural armor, cold resistance 5.
Feat: –
Value: 2

RAMON PEREZ

Great Reserves
Reserves is double your hit point score (instead of your hit point score). Your healing rate does not change. If your Con modifier changes, your reserves go up or down twice as much as normal.
Feat: +5 reserve points
Value: 3

Haste Self
You speed yourself up. Since activating Haste Self is a free action, you benefit from it on the same round you start it. You gain the following benefits while hasted:
+30 ft. unencumbered speed (but not more than double your unencumbered speed).
+2 haste bonus to melee attack rolls (not ranged attack rolls).
+2 haste bonus to AC (which you lose if you would lose your Dex bonus to AC).
1 extra physical attack at your normal attack bonus each turn.
Uses: 6 rounds/day
Feat: +2 rounds/day
Value: 3

Heightened ABILITY
+10 to the named ability score.
If a creature with 1 or 2 Int gets +10 Int, give the mutant 1d12+2 Int instead.
Feat: –
Value: Strength 6
Dexterity 6
Constitution 6
Intelligence 3
Wisdom 4
Charisma 3

Horns
2d4 damage, double damage on a charge. (Remember, a critical hit on a charge would be triple damage, not quadruple.)
The mutant can make a horn attack in addition to its other attacks, but all attacks are -2 for the round.
Feat: +2 damage on a charge, repeatable
Value: 2

Immunity—Poison/Psychic
The mutant is immune to poison or to psychic effects. The mutant can't suspend its immunity, even if it wants to. Among other things, this means that a mutant who's immune to poison can't get drunk.
Feat: –
Value: 1

Keen Ears/Eyes
+20 on Listen/Spot.
Feat: –
Value: 1

Keen Nose
Scent, 30 ft. range.
Feat: +5 ft. range
Value: 1

Leech Damage
As a standard action, remove 1d6 points of damage from the touched subject. The mutant then suffers the amount of damage healed. Damage is restored first to hit points and then to reserve points. Damage is suffered as hit points (even if it restores reserve points).
Uses: 1/round
Feat: +1d6 points of damage leeched
Value: 2

Leech Strength
With a touch attack, the mutant can deal 1d4 Strength damage to another living creature. The mutant gains an enhancement bonus to Strength of the same amount. Multiple bonuses to Strength don't stack; only the biggest one counts.
Feat: –
Value: 7

Levitate Self [Psychic]
As a free action, the mutant can psychically lift itself into the air. It works like the spell *levitate*, but with personal range. Caster level = 5th.
Uses: 3/day
Feat: +1 use per day
Value: 5

Life Leech [Psychic]
As a standard action, the mutant drains vital energy from living things within 30 feet, friend and foe alike. Use a single die roll for damage and a single Psychic Attack check for the DC of the saving throw. Those who fail the saving throw suffer 1d6 points of damage. The mutant gains as many temporary hit points as it deals to the other creatures put together. Temporary hit points from multiple uses of Life Leech do not stack. The temporary hit points fade after an hour.
Uses: 1/day
Feat: +1 use/day, repeatable
Value: 6

Light Slip
The mutant bends light around itself, making itself invisible. The effect lasts 5 rounds. (Attacking doesn't make the mutant turn visible.)
Uses: 1/day
Feat: +1 use per day, repeatable
Value: 8

Light Warp
The mutant warps light around itself, creating an effect equivalent to *blur*. The effect lasts 5 rounds.
Uses: 3/day
Feat: +1 use per day, repeatable
Value: 4

Lightning Touch
Once per day, the mutant can deliver 6d6 points of electric damage with a touch attack. If the attack misses, the electricity isn't expended.
Once the attack is used, the capacity to use it again returns to full in 24 hours. (It actually returns one die at a time, pro-rated

over 24 hours, so that's one d6 per 4 hours for the standard 6d6 capacity.) The mutant can voluntarily deal less than full damage to save some of the dice for a later attack.

Uses: 6d6/day

Feat: Additional d6 capacity, repeatable; the mutant can still deal only up to 6d6 damage with a single strike

Value: 4

Low-light Vision

Low-light vision.

Feat: –

Value: 1

Overpowering Stench

When the mutant's adrenaline kicks in, it can let off a powerful stench. All living creatures within 5 ft. of the mutant suffer -2 on attack rolls and skill checks.

Feat: –

Value: 2

Padded Feet

+10 Move Silently.

Feat: –

Value: 1

Pincers

Two natural weapons deal 1d6 damage each. The mutant can make a normal attack with one pincer. If it strikes with the second pincer, all attacks are at -2 for the round. If both pincers hit the same target, the mutant "rends" the target for additional damage of 2d6 + 1.5 x the mutant's Strength bonus (as if wielding a two-handed weapon).

Feat: –

Value: 2

Poison Bite

Bite deals 1d6 damage + poison. The poison's primary and secondary damage is 1d6 Str (01-20 on d%), Dex (21-40), or Con (41-100). The primary DC is 13. The secondary DC is 18.

The mutant can use the bite as a single or primary attack. If used as a secondary attack, all attacks are at -2 for the round, and the mutant only gets half its Str bonus on damage with the bite (as for an off-hand weapon).

Feat: DC +1

Value: 5

Psychic Double [Psychic]

As a standard action, the mutant can slip into a trance and project itself as a "psychic double." The effect lasts 10 minutes. As a double, the mutant is incorporeal, appearing as a translucent, shimmering "ghost." It can use its psychic abilities but can't interact bodily with the environment or other creatures. (It can interact bodily with other incorporeal creatures.)

Uses: 1/day

Feat: +1 use/day

Value: 4

Psychic Healing [Psychic]

As a standard action, cure up to 2d6 damage by touch, up to 6d6 total per day.

Feat: One additional d6 per day capacity, repeatable

Value: 4

Quills

If grappling, the mutant can make a quill attack as a free action. The quills deal 1d6 damage + half the mutant's Str bonus (as with an off-hand weapon). Making this extra attack does not incur attack penalties, as with many other natural weapon mutations.

Feat: –

Value: 2

Rage

Barbarian rage.

Uses: 1/day

Feat: +1 round duration

Value: 4

RAMON PEREZ

Regeneration
Reserve points automatically convert to hit points at the rate of 5 per round, at the start of the mutant's turn.
Feat: +1 reserve point converts per round, repeatable
Value: 3

Resist Radiation
Ignore the first 12 points of Con damage from radiation each day. Damage that is negated does not cause the player to check for possible mutations or defects.
If a mutant gets this mutation a second time, it negates the first 12 points of Con damage done each hour. A third time, each minute. A fourth time, each round.
Mutants with this mutation can live in radioactive areas indefinitely, and often do.
Feat: +2 points negated, repeatable
Value: 1

Scales
+3 natural armor.
Feat: –
Value: 3

Shaper
Alter self (similar to the spell) as a free action. It does not affect gear or other objects, only the mutant's body itself. The new shape does not have a different natural armor rating or ability scores, but it can have camouflaged coloring (+10 Hide), longer limbs (+10 ft. unencumbered speed), wings (see Wings mutation), gills, a tail (see Tail mutation), or climbing hooks (see Climbing Hooks mutation).
Duration: 10 minutes
Uses: 1/day
Feat: +1 use/day
Value: 3

Sonic Blast
Deal 1d6 points of sonic damage in a 30-ft. cone. No save for half damage.
Uses: 1/round
Feat: +1 damage, repeatable
Value: 8

Spring Legs
+10 ft. base speed, +30 Jump.
Feat: –
Value: 2

Swimmer
Swim speed 5 ft. See swim in the *Monster Manual*.
Feat: +5 ft.
Value: 1

Tail
+4 Balance, Jump, and Swim checks.
It's possible that a mutant without this mutation can have a tail that doesn't grant these bonuses, a tail too slim or short or fluffy to be used as a counterweight or paddle.
Feat: –
Value: 1

Telekinesis [Psychic]
As a standard action, the mutant can use *telekinesis* (as the spell at 5th-level casting). Will saves to negate Telekinesis are made with the mutant's Psychic Attack result as the DC.
Uses: 3/day
Feat: +1 use/day, repeatable; or +2 caster level, repeatable
Value: 5

Telepathy [Psychic]
The mutant can *detect thoughts* (as the spell) and project its own thoughts (the equivalent of speech) to a range of 60 ft. A will save against Telepathy blocks the subject's mind for 1 hour. (The telepath can still detect the presence of the blocked mind, but can read its thoughts or send thoughts to it.) Using Telepathy is a standard action.
Uses: 1/round
Feat: +10 ft. range
Value: 3

Tentacles
Improved grab with natural weapons. See *Monster Manual*.
Feat: +1 on grapple checks, repeatable
Value: 1

Time Slip
The mutant can "slip" forward several seconds in time. To those left behind, the mutant seems to disappear. Then, two copies of the mutant appear, one from "now" and one from several seconds ago. The two "selves" each act as a duplicate of the original, and at the end of the slip's duration one copy (determined randomly) disappears "back" to several seconds ago.
The slip's duration is up to 5 rounds. The mutant and his equipment disappear for up to 5 rounds (the duration chosen when the mutant first slips), then two appear and fight (or whatever) for the same number of rounds, and at the end of that round one of the two selves (along with that self's equipment) disappears.
The mutant time slips as a free action at any point in its turn. The amount of its turn that it "gives up" on the round that it time slips is how much of a turn it can take when it time slips back in. If the mutant time slips at the start of its turn, for example, it (or both of it) gets to take a whole turn when it comes back. If it time slips at the end of its turn, it can't take a turn when it slips back and must wait until the following round to act.
Time slip is a great way to effectively double the number of grenades you have.
Uses: Special
Feat: +1 round duration
Value: 5

Tougher
+2 hp/HD. (This also increases your reserves.)
Feat: –
Value: 2

Tremorsense
Tremorsense 30 ft. See *Dungeon Master's Guide*.
Feat: +30 ft.
Value: 1

TABLE 1-4: RANDOM DEFECTS

d%	Defect	Summary	Value
1–4	Distinctive Odor	Smells horrible	1
5–6	Reduced Charisma	-4 to Charisma	1
7–10	Poor Respiratory	System fatigued after 5 rounds of combat, lasts 1 hour	2
11–14	Slow	-5 ft. Speed	2
15–16	Reduced Intelligence	-4 to Intelligence	2
17–18	Reduced Wisdom	-4 to Wisdom	2
19	Sensitivity to Acid	Double damage from acid	2
20	Sensitivity to Cold	Double damage from cold	2
21	Sensitivity to Electricity	Double damage from electricity	2
22	Sensitivity to Fire	Double damage from fire	2
23	Sensitivity to Poison	Double damage from poison	2
24	Sensitivity to Radiation	Double damage from radiation	2
25	Sensitivity to Sonics	Double damage from sonics	2
26–29	Heightened Metabolism	Needs water after 5 rounds of combat; -5 saves vs. poison, disease	3
30–33	Stiff Motion	Always flat-footed	3
34–35	Terrible Fortitude	-10 on Fortitude saving throws	3
36–37	Terrible Reflex	-10 on Reflex saving throws	3
38–39	Terrible Will	-10 on Will saving throws	3
40–43	Real Slow	One "step" slower	4
44–46	Poor Dual Brain	10% chance per melee round that you make a confused action (as *confusion* spell)	4
47–49	Frenzy	Each round of combat, 10% to go bonkers	6
50–53	Fits	10% chance per melee round	7
54–57	Smaller	1 size category smaller	7
58–59	Reduced Strength	-4 to Strength	7
60–63	Partial Action Only	Applies in combat, not in daily life	8
64–66	Weapon Incompetent	Never proficient with weapons (other than natural ones)	8
67–68	Reduced Dexterity	-4 to Dexterity	8
69–72	Fear Response	Shaken in combat (or other danger)	9
73–75	Bleeder	-1 hit point per round per wound until stopped	9
76–79	Crude Hands	-4 with all handheld items (weapons, etc.) and manipulation (e.g., Disabling Device)	10
80–83	Fragile	Double damage from weapons (not energy, etc.)	10
84–86	Terrible Vision	Can pinpoint creatures with sight out to 30 ft.	12
87–88	Reduced Constitution	-4 to Constitution	15
89–90	No Arms	Good afternoon, Mr. Stumpy	20
91–100	Stock Defect	See Table 1-2: Mutant Stock Statistics	–

Uncanny Dodge

Retain Dex bonus to AC when flat-footed or attacked by an invisible attacker, and can't be flanked, as a 5th-level barbarian.

Feat: –

Value: 1

Wings

The mutant has wings (in addition to other limbs) and can fly at its normal ground speed for up to 6 rounds per hour. (The mutant is too heavy to fly as easily as a hollow-boned bird.) The wings are useful for getting to the tops of cliffs or getting a good view of the surroundings, but not for travel.

Bigger and smaller mutants have different flight limits:

Fine:	12 hours/day
Diminutive:	10 minutes/hour
Tiny:	3 minutes/hour
Small:	1 minute/hour
Medium-size:	6 rounds/hour
Large:	3 rounds/hour
Huge:	2 rounds/hour
Gargantuan:	1 round/hour
Colossal:	1 round/day

Feat: +1 round/hour (The GM can vary this for very big and very little creatures.)

Value: 5

DEFECTS

A character with mutations rolls its defects on Table 1-4: Random Defects. If, after rolling a defect, the total value of your defects exceeds the total value of your mutations, you can stop rolling for defects. Otherwise, you must roll more defects.

DEFECT RULES

If penalties on abilities take your ability score to 0 or lower, remember to use Table 2-5: Monster PCs' Ability Scores and Table 2-6: Monster PCs' Intelligence Ability Scores in the *DMG*. (Technically, you should use these tables whenever an ability has a -4 penalty or worse, or when Intelligence has any penalty.) Use the 8-9 column for -2 penalty, 6-7 for -4 penalty, 4-5 for a -6 penalty, etc.

Combat: Many defects trigger during "combat." These defects are triggered by stress, and so combat makes them surface. Other dangerous, stressful circumstances also trigger these defects.

DEFECT DESCRIPTIONS

Defects are listed in alphabetical order.

Bleeder

Each time the mutant suffers damage (but not subdual damage), it suffers a bleeding wound and loses 1 additional hit point per round (like being hit by a weapon of *wounding*). Bleeding takes place at the start of the mutant's turn, and all the bleeding can be stopped with a single DC 15 Heal check.

Value: 9

Crude Hands

The mutant's hands are not as articulate as a human's (or as a *normal* human's). It suffers -4 on all attack rolls using handheld weapons and skill checks that require fine manipulation (such as Disable Device).

Value: 10

Distinctive Odor

The mutant's odor is easier for creatures with Scent to detect and follow. Such creatures can detect the mutant if within 60 feet. If the mutant is downwind, the range drops to 30 feet. If the mutant is upwind, the range increases to 120 feet.

Even creatures without Scent can recognize the mutant's presence and even identify the mutant by scent alone.

Value: 1

Fear Response

The mutant's flight instincts are too strong. In combat or other dangerous situations, it is shaken (-2 on attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, and saving throws).

Value: 9

Fits

The mutant has a 10% chance each round to be overcome by involuntary motions and fall to the ground. Doing so keeps the mutant from doing anything else that round, and it draws attacks of opportunity.

Value: 7

MUTATIONS, DEFECTS, AND HOPELESS CHARACTERS

If your character has sucky mutations and punishing defects, you might think your character is hopeless and that you should get to roll over. You can roll over, as soon as this character is dead and you're generating a new one. So rush to the fore in combat. Even if your character is so misbegotten that you never lay a point of damage on the enemy, you'll at least suck up some attacks that would otherwise hurt the characters that count. Pretty soon, you're on to character number two.

It is improper, however, to roll up your next character first and use that to help you decide whether to kamikaze your current character.

Fragile

The mutant's body and bone structure are faulty. It suffers double damage from weapon damage. It does not suffer double damage from energy damage, psychic damage, etc.

Value: 10

Frenzy

When in combat, the mutant sometimes gets so worked up that it momentarily forgets who is friend and who is foe. Every round of combat, the mutant has a 10% chance to attack a random creature instead of acting normally. If the mutant is in melee, it attacks one of the creatures that it could attack (with or without a 5-ft. step). If the mutant is out of melee, it attacks a random creature that it can hit with a ranged weapon (if it has a ranged weapon in hand) or advances on a random creature that it could get to and attack this round (with a regular move or a charge).

Don't give a black ray pistol to a buddy who has this defect.

Value: 6

Heightened Metabolism

The mutant consumes twice as much food, water, and oxygen as normal. After 5 rounds of combat or other intense physical activity, the mutant must spend a round drinking water to replenish itself. Until it does so, it's winded. The mutant can "reset" by replenishing early, such as fighting for 3 rounds, replenishing, and then fighting 5 more rounds.

The mutant also always suffers a -5 penalty on saves against disease and poison because its body spreads toxins and disease organisms throughout its system so quickly.

Value: 3

No Arms

The mutant has no arms, or any arms it has are too defective to function. It can handle things with its feet, but it can't wield weapons and such with them. It can make unarmed attacks normally (kicks). It is adept at maneuvering its body without arms, and so it suffers only a -2 penalty on skill checks that involve arms (such as climbing and swimming). It can even use its toes (or possibly lips and teeth) to manipulate small tools, so it can make skill checks that require fine manipulation (albeit at a -4 penalty).

Value: 20

Partial Action Only

Combat and other dangerous events overexcite the mutant, making it hesitate. It can only take a partial action on its turn.

Value: 8

Poor Dual Brain

The mutant has a second brain, which is defective. Each round of combat, there's a 10% chance that the second brain (desperate because of the life-and-death situation that it's in) wrests control of the body from the first

01-40	Look around, do nothing
41-60	Wander in a random direction (single move)
61-90	Attack a random creature (as with Frenzy)
91-100	Flop onto the ground (as with Fits)

brain for that one round. If it does so, roll on this table to see what the mutant does.

Value: 4

Poor Respiratory System

After 5 rounds of combat, the mutant is fatigued for 1 hour. If the mutant has been fighting but hasn't reached 5 rounds yet, a round spent resting sets the count back one round. For example, the mutant could fight 3 rounds, rest 2 rounds, and then fight 4 more rounds. At the end of its turn on that 9th round, the mutant would be fatigued.

Value: 2

Real Slow

The mutant is "one step" slower than normal (like a character that gets one size category smaller or puts on medium armor).

Value: 4

Base Speed	New Speed
20 ft.	15 ft.
30 ft.	20 ft.
40 ft.	25 ft.
50 ft.	35 ft.

Reduced ABILITY

The mutant suffers a -4 penalty to the listed ability. See Tables 2-5 and 2-6 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (tables brought to you by people who are serious about math).

Value: Strength 7
Dexterity 8
Constitution 15
Intelligence 2
Wisdom 2
Charisma 1

Sensitivity to ATTACK

The mutant suffers double damage from the listed energy type, from poison, or from radiation.

Value: 2

Slow

The mutant's unencumbered speed is 5 ft. slower than normal. Encumbered speed is about 70% of unencumbered speed.

Value: 2

Unencumbered Speed	Encumbered Speed
15 ft.	10 ft.
25 ft.	15 ft.
35 ft.	25 ft.
45 ft.	30 ft.

Smaller

The mutant is one size category smaller. For a Medium-size creature, apply these bonuses: -4 Strength, +2 Dex, -2 Con, +1 size modifier (to attack and AC). For other sizes, see Advancement in the Introduction of the *Monster Manual*. Use the table to back-figure the modifications.

Mutations that have damage dice and other dice related to hit points are decreased. Use the damages listed for weapons of different sizes on Table 1-8: Omega Weapons to determine how the dice increase. For example, Psychic Healing heals 2d6 damage. For a Small mutant, it would heal 2d4 damage. (You can see on Table 1-8 that 2d4 is one step below 2d6.)

It's harsh to make a mutant's special powers weaker just because the mutant is smaller. But that way psychic rats don't deal damage way out of proportion to their size. Plus, *Omega World* is all about being harsh.

The mutant is also "one step" slower than normal (like a character that puts on medium armor).

Value: 7

Base Speed	New Speed	Encumbered Speed
20 ft.	15 ft.	10 ft.
30 ft.	20 ft.	15 ft.
40 ft.	25 ft.	15 ft.
50 ft.	35 ft.	25 ft.

Stiff Motion

The mutant's coordination is jerky. It is always flat-footed. This means it never gets its Dex bonus to AC, and that it can't make attacks of opportunity. (No, you can't take the Combat Reflexes feat, but nice try.)

(In a campaign in which sneak attacks are common, this defect has a higher value.)

Value: 3

Terrible SAVE

The mutant suffers a -10 penalty on saves of the listed type.

Value: Fortitude 3
Reflex 3
Will 3

Terrible Vision

The mutant can see well enough to pinpoint other creatures within 30 ft. That is, it knows where those creatures are, but they are effectively "concealed" to the mutant, so the mutant suffers a 50% miss chance against them. Beyond 30 ft., the mutant sees light, motion, and possibly texture, but it can't pinpoint creatures with sight.

May I be so bold as to recommend that a mutant with this defect consider the feat Blind-fight, which helps a great deal in melee, if not with ranged attacks? Also, running recklessly into combat and fiddling with unknown relics couldn't hurt.

Value: 12

Weapon Incompetent

The mutant's brain doesn't "grok" weapons. The mutant is never proficient with weapons (other than natural weapons) and thus suffers a -4 on attack rolls with weapons. (Grenade-like weapons, however, require no proficiency.)

Value: 8

EXPLORER CLASS

All *Omega World* PCs are explorers. Explorers are the versatile, handy, tough survivors who can overcome, or at least face, the various hazards and horrors of *Omega World*.

GAME RULE INFORMATION

Explorers have the following game mechanics.

Abilities: Explorers can make use of good scores in any abilities.

Alignment: Characters in *Omega World* have personalities, motivations, hopes, and fears, not alignments.

Hit Dice: d10

TABLE 1-5: THE EXPLORER

Level	Base Attack	Good Save	Middle Save	Bad Save	Special
1st	+0	+2	+1	+0	Bonus Feat
2nd	+1	+3	+1	+0	Bonus Feat
3rd	+2	+3	+2	+1	Bonus Feat
4th	+3	+4	+2	+1	Bonus Feat
5th	+3	+4	+3	+1	Bonus Feat
6th	+4	+5	+3	+2	Bonus Feat
7th	+5	+5	+3	+2	Bonus Feat
8th	+6/+1	+6	+4	+2	Bonus Feat
9th	+6/+1	+6	+4	+3	Bonus Feat
10th	+7/+2	+7	+5	+3	Bonus Feat

If you manage to get past 10th level without your leg getting chewed off by a giant ladybug, you can do the math.

CLASS SKILLS

Select any 8 skills as class skills. Skills common among explorers include Climb, Diplomacy, Handle Animal, Heal, Hide, Listen, Move Silently, Psychic Attack (if the character has a psychic attack mutation), Ride, Search, Spot, Swim, Tumble, and Wilderness Lore.

A pure-strain human may take a Tech skill as a class skill. Mutant PCs can buy ranks in the skill, but it's always a cross-class skill for them.

An explorer may spend 2 skill points to be able to speak "the Ancient tongue," and another 2 points to be able to read it. (You can spend 2 points to be able to read and write whatever bastard tongue you speak, but hardly anyone ever writes anything in it.)

Skill Points at 1st Level: (4 + Int) x 4
Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int mod

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are the class features of the explorer.

Weapon and Armor Proficiencies: Explorers are proficient with melee weapons and crossbows (see Table 1-8: Omega Weapons). Explorers are not proficient with bows by default because crossbows are more common among civilized groups. (You can take proficiency with a bow as a feat.) Explorers are proficient with light armor.

Saving Throws: Each explorer has one good saving throw, one middle saving throw, and one bad saving throw, chosen at character creation.

Bonus Feats: At each level, an explorer gains a bonus feat, which may be any feat. This is in addition to the feats a character gets by virtue of race or of character level.

SKILLS

Omega World has two new skills: Tech (working with relics) and Psychic Attack (for mutants with psychic attacks).

Omega characters have to be adaptable. As with feats (see below), you can hold your current level's skill points undefined. Instead of applying them immediately on gaining a new level, you can wait until later. You can only define skill points between adventures. (You can't apply them to Swim after you've fallen into a raging river.) You have to define them before going up the next level. If you gain enough XP to go up a level while you have skill points undefined, you have to define them before making any level-up changes to your character.

Your character can start with its current level's skill points undefined.

PSYCHIC ATTACK (CHA)

A mutant with some form of psychic attack uses this skill to overcome another creature's resistance.

Check: When you make a psychic attack, make a Psychic Attack check. That's the DC for the defender's saving throw.

No, it isn't any fair to have a skill check (which can go +1 level) opposed by a Will save (which goes up at best +1 per 2 levels). But if psychic attacks are supposed to remain viable in a world with torc rifles, they can't be fair.

Since you can use this skill untrained, a mutant without this skill sets the DC of its psychic attacks with a Cha check.

Retry: Every time you make a psychic attack, you roll your check again.

TABLE 1-6: BEGINNING SKILL POINTS

Stock	Hit Dice	Base Skill Points	Int Mod	Minimum Skill Points
Clicky, Hairy, Scaly	2	20	x5	5
Mutated Human	3	24	x6	6
Pure Strain Human	4	35*	x7	7

* includes the extra 7 human bonus points

Base Skill Points: The base number of starting skill points, not modified by Int.
Int Mod: Multiply Int mod by this factor to get additional skill points.
Minimum Skill Points: Even if you're really stupid, you start with this many skill points.

TECH (INT; TRAINED ONLY)

Use tech skills to identify and repair broken relics.

Like the Knowledge skill, Tech actually encompasses a number of unrelated skills. Tech represents the study of and familiarity with some aspect of advanced engineering or jury-rigging. There are four Tech skill types:

- **Bang:** Explosives, gunpowder weapons, internal combustion engines, etc.
- **Hard:** Metals, alloys, structures, vehicles, armor, etc.
- **Med:** Medicine, surgery, medical relics, etc.
- **Zap:** Energy weapons, beams, force fields, etc.

Check: Getting a busted relic working requires a check against a DC that depends on the status of the relic. It also requires a set of tools suited to the skill (see Gear).

Status	DC
Perfect	1d10+15
Good	1d10+20
Bad	1d10*+25
Broken	no

*If the d10 comes up odd, add that number and roll again. Repeat if you roll odds multiple times.

Retry: Yes.

Special: Among PC stocks, only a pure-strain human can take Tech as a class skill.

FEATS

All standard feats are allowed, except the ones that don't make any sense in *Omega World*. Some feats you'll find in supplemental sourcebooks are also probably OK, just ask the GM. Special feats for *Omega World* are described below.

UNDEFINED FEATS

Omega characters need to be adaptable to survive. Therefore, you may hold your current level's feats undefined, and define them at any point before you next advance a level. That way, for example, if you find a Mark V blaster pistol you can define your feat as "Relic Weapon Group Proficiency (Relic Ranged Weapons)" right away instead of waiting until you level up and get another feat.

You can only define an undefined feat between adventures. (You can't define your undefined feat as Lightning Reflexes just before making a saving throw against a grenade's explosion.)

If you gain a new level before defining any undefined feats, you must define those feats immediately. You must use the scores you have at your current level as prerequisites rather than the scores you'll gain at your new level. For example, if you have 12 Strength, you can't hold your 7th-level feat undefined until you reach 8th level, increase your Strength to 13, and then define Cleave as your 7th-level feat. (But I don't blame you for thinking of it.)

FEAT DESCRIPTIONS

Feats are listed in alphabetical order.

Armor Proficiency (powered)

You can use powered armor efficiently.

Prerequisite: Armor Proficiency (light), Armor Proficiency (medium).

Benefit: See Armor Proficiency (light) in the *PH*.

Normal: See Armor Proficiency (light) in the *PH*. Plus, the character does not get the bonuses to skill checks, ability checks, or abilities that the armor may provide.

Multishot [General]

You can use the autofire option on relic weapons with exceptional accuracy.

Prerequisites: Point Blank Shot, Rapid Fire, Dex 13+.

When using the autofire option on a relic weapon, reduce the penalty for each attack to -2 (for multifire) or -4 (for autofire). See Chapter 2: Combat.

RAMON PEREZ

Relic Weapon Group Proficiency [General]

You are proficient with one of the following groups of weapons:

- Relic Ranged Weapons (guns)
- Relic Melee Weapons (vibro blades, etc.)
- Relic Heavy Weapons (big guns)

Benefit: You make attacks normally with those weapons.

Normal: You suffer -4 on attack rolls with relic weapons. No proficiency is needed, however, with grenades or with weapons that don't require attack rolls.

Special: You can take this feat multiple times, each time for a different relic weapon group.

Superior Mutation [General]

Your mutation is better than average.

Prerequisite: A mutation that gets better when feats are applied to it.

Benefit: See the mutation in question.

Special: Most mutations allow you to take the Superior Mutation feat multiple times.

GEAR

A beginning character gets 8 pieces of regular gear plus 1 random special gear. Pure strain humans get an extra 2 pieces of random special gear. Roll twice on Table 1-7: Random Special Gear to determine special gear.

REGULAR GEAR

A beginning character starts with 8 of the following items:

Good Weapon (plus 20 projectiles, if a projectile weapon), see Table 1-8: Omega Weapons
Set of armor, see Table 1-9: Omega Armor
Shield (small or large), see Table 1-9: Omega Armor
50 projectiles (arrows, etc.)
Camping gear
A weeks' provisions
Set of Tools (for a Tech skill, such as Tech [zap])
Climbing gear (rope, pick-axe, pitons, harness, etc.)
First aid kit (healer's kit from the *Player's Handbook*)

RANDOM SPECIAL GEAR DESCRIPTIONS

Battle Mount: A Medium-size explorer with a battle mount has a podog, a Large mutated dog. A Small explorer with a battle mount has a giant lizard (see *Monster Manual*) that's trained as a battle mount.

Hybrid Weapon: A hybrid weapon of the player's choice See Table 1-8.

Random Working Relic: Roll for status on Table 4-1: Random Relic Status and type on Table 4-2: Random Relics.

Riding Mount: A Medium-size explorer with a riding mount has a hopper, a Large mutated rabbit (see Chapter 5: Encounters). A Small explorer with a riding mount has a giant beetle. Use the *MM* scores for the bombardier beetle, except that the giant beetle does not spray acid.

Trade Goods: Portable, valuable goods, worth about as much as a riding mount or a hybrid weapon. Player's choice as to what they are, but they could be spices, special fabrics, or relics (everyday items). As has been true in most of human history, addictive, mood enhancing drugs are popular trade goods (mostly coffee, tea, alcohol, and tobacco).

TABLE 1-7: RANDOM SPECIAL GEAR

d%	Special Gear
01-30	Hybrid Weapon
31-60	Trade Goods
61-75	Riding Mount*
76-80	Battle Mount*
81-100	Random Working Relic (random working status)

*If the explorer is Large, instead of a mount it has a hybrid weapon (01-50) or trade goods (51-100).

RAMON PEREZ

TABLE 1-8: OMEGA WEAPONS

Melee Weapon

Size	Primitive	Good	Hybrid	Weight
Tiny	1d3, 20/x2	1d4, 20/x2	1d6, 19-20/x2	1 lb.
Small	1d4, 20/x2	1d6, 20/x2	2d4, 19-20/x2	2 lb.
Medium-size	1d6, 20/x2	2d4, 20/x2	2d6, 19-20/x2	4 lb.
Large	2d4, 20/x2	2d6, 20/x2	3d6, 19-20/x2	8 lb.
Huge	2d6, 20/x2	3d6, 20/x2	4d6, 19-20/x2	16 lb.

Thrown Weapon

Size	Primitive	Good	Hybrid	Weight
Tiny	1d2, 20/x2	1d3, 20/x2	1d4, 19-20/x2	1 lb.
Small	1d3, 20/x2	1d4, 20/x2	1d6, 19-20/x2	2 lb.
Medium-size	1d4, 20/x2	1d6, 20/x2	2d4, 19-20/x2	4 lb.
Large	1d6, 20/x2	2d4, 20/x2	2d6, 19-20/x2	8 lb.
Huge	2d4, 20/x2	2d6, 20/x2	3d6, 19-20/x2	16 lb.

Bow* or Crossbow

Size	Primitive	Good	Hybrid	Weight
Tiny	1d2, 20/x2	1d3, 20/x2	1d4, 19-20/x2	1/2 or 1 lb.
Small	1d3, 20/x2	1d4, 20/x2	1d6, 19-20/x2	1 or 2 lb.
Medium-size	1d4, 20/x2	1d6, 20/x2	2d4, 19-20/x2	2 or 4 lb.
Large	1d6, 20/x2	2d4, 20/x2	2d6, 19-20/x2	4 or 8 lb.
Huge	2d4, 20/x2	2d6, 20/x2	3d6, 19-20/x2	8 or 16 lb.

*Explorers are not proficient with bows as a class feature. You need a feat to use one proficiently.

Melee Weapons: Axes, spears, swords, clubs, etc.

Primitive: Clubs, throwing rocks, wooden spears, etc. Hand-made from raw materials. Savages have primitive weapons, and explorers can easily fashion primitive melee weapons and throwing weapons from sticks and stones.

Good: Competently built weapons, often with metal parts scavenged from ancient sites. Or ancient items used opportunistically as weapons, such as tire irons and parking meters. Explorers start with good weapons.

Hybrid: Expertly built weapons using Ancient materials. It's not necessarily a relic weapon. Usually it's a weapon built using relic materials.

TABLE 1-9: OMEGA ARMOR

Armor	Bonus	Max Dex	Check	Weight
Cloth (= padded)	+1	+8	0	10 lb.
Leather	+2	+6	0	15 lb.
Half-metal (= studded)	+3	+5	-1	20 lb.
Metal* (= scale)	+4	+3	-4	30 lb.
Small shield (wooden)	+1	—	-1	5 lb.
Large shield (wooden)	+2	—	-2	10 lb.

*Metal armor is medium armor. An explorer needs the Armor Proficiency (medium) feat to use it effectively, and it slows movement speed.

Metal Armor: The only metal armor commonly available is the equivalent of scale. Practically nobody makes other kinds of metal armor because practically no communities have the resources needed. Communities are more likely to thrive by exploiting ancient relics than by putting together the capital and expertise necessary to create sophisticated, medieval-style armor. Relic armor is therefore more common than chainmail or plate armor.

CHAPTER 2 COMBAT AND FREEFORM EXPERIENCE

SURVIVING THE POST-BOMB LANDSCAPE REQUIRES UNDERSTANDING A FEW MINOR RULES DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OMEGA WORLD AND DUNGEONS & DRAGONS.

RELIC WEAPONS IN COMBAT

Use these rules for relic weapons in combat.

RELIC WEAPONS AND ARMOR

Normal armor is not very effective against relic weapons.

How Relic Weapons and Armor Work: Against regular attacks, Narms's Dex and half-metal armor give him an AC of 17. Against relic attacks, however, it's only 12. Leonard, wearing flex armor, has an AC of 15, even against relic attacks.

Relic Armor Class: Relic weapons blow right through most regular and natural armor. Normal armor is weaker against relic attacks than against normal attacks. Relic armor, on the other hand, was built to withstand relic weapons, and it functions normally against them.

Relic weapons ignore the first 5 points of non-relic armor. Against a relic weapon, a creature has a special armor class, called the relic armor class, "RAC." This is 5 less than the creature's normal AC, but not less than the creature's touch AC.

Another way to think of it is that a creature's natural armor, artificial armor, and shield are worth 5 points less protection (total) against relic attacks (but not less than 0 points of protection).

RELIC WEAPONS AND ATTACKS OF OPPORTUNITY

Firing a gun does not draw an attack of opportunity, as using an archaic ranged weapon does.

Throwing a grenade does draw an attack of opportunity.

THROWING GRENADES

Grenades are grenade-like weapons. (You probably already had that figured out.)

Since *Omega World* is a dangerous place, and *Omega World* grenades have really big "splash" areas, grenades fall further from their mark than in D&D. When rolling for distance for a scattering grenade, the distance from the mark is 1d6 per 20 ft. the grenade was thrown (1d6 per range increment), with a minimum of 1d6 ft.

For example, Kokbuk throws a grenade 50 ft. and misses. The player rolls 2d6 and gets 9, so the grenade lands 9 feet away.

RESERVE POINTS

Each character has a reserves score, representing their capacity to recover quickly from injury. Characters use reserves to replenish lost hit points. Thus, characters may be wounded and near death by the end of a fight but then recover to full strength (or nearly full strength) before the next fight begins. Still, they can't take a beating over and over again without depleting their capacity to recover. Reserve points effectively double the number of hit points a character can lose over the course of multiple fights but do not increase the amount of damage a character can withstand in a single fight.

TOM FOWLER

TOM FOWLER

How Reserve Points Work: Narms has 22 hit points, so he also has 22 reserve points. In a battle with psychic rats, he suffers 6 damage, dropping his hit points to 16. After the fight (over the course of 6 minutes), his reserve points "convert" to hit points. His new hit points score is 22, and his new reserve score is 16. During the next fight, he suffers 24 damage, drops to -2, bleeds for five rounds, and finally stabilizes at -7. Over the next 16 minutes, his last 16 reserve points convert to hit points. After the first 7 minutes he's conscious but disabled (0 hp). After the 8th minute, he's back on his feet (1 hp), and after all 16 minutes he's up to 9 hit points and 0 reserves.

Narms gets a day of rest. He gets 6 hit points back (double his level), so he's up to 15 hp. Another day gives him 6 more: 21 hp. (He's still at 0 reserves. If he regained any reserves, they'd just convert to hit points anyway.) After the third day of rest, Narms has full hit points (22) and 5 reserve points (the rest of the day's 6 points of healing). In another three days, his reserves will be back at full, too.

Reserve Points Score: A character's reserves score equals their baseline hit points. A character with 17 hit points, for example, has 17 reserve points as well.

Reserve points automatically convert to hit points at the rate of 1 per minute of non-strenuous activity (such as hiking, but not climbing, swimming, or fighting). For each hit point gained in this way, the character also reduces subdual damage (if any) by 1. If the character has only subdual damage, they can convert reserve points to reduce subdual damage at the rate of 1 per minute (representing pushing oneself), or they can let the subdual damage recover normally (at the standard rate of 1 per character level per hour).

Replenishing Reserve Points and Hit Points: For healing, treat hit points and reserve points interchangeably. Healing increases the hit points score up to the baseline score, and excess healing restores reserve points. Since characters effectively have twice as many hit points as in the D&D game, healing is twice as fast: 2 points per Hit Die per day of rest.

Constitution Bonus and Reserves: Changes in your Con bonus affect reserves just as they affect hit points. If your Con goes up or down, your reserves go up and down, just as your hit points do. If your reserves drop below 0, the excess damage is hit point damage.

For example, Kokbuk has been knocked around today, and now he gets poisoned. His hit points were at full, 28, but his reserves were down to 5. The poison deals 7 Con damage, dropping his Con modifier from +2 to -1. He loses 3 points off each of his 3 Hit Dice, so his hit points and his reserves each drop 9 points. His hit points drop to 19, and his reserves drop to -4. The excess loss in reserves comes off hit points, so his final statistics are 15 hp and 0 reserves, representing a total of 18 points of damage.

Vitality Points: Reserves are like vitality points in the *Star Wars* RPG in that they're a system to allow characters to recover quickly from wounds. But they do not work the same way. You don't, for example, take damage to your reserves first, so get that out of your head.

AUTOFIRE

Most relic guns have autofire capability, meaning you can fire multiple times in a round.

TABLE 2-1: MULTIPLE AUTOFIRE ATTACKS

Extra Attacks	Normal Penalty	With Multifire
one	-4	-2
two	-6	-4
three*	-8	-6

*Only possible if you have the Rapid Shot feat.

Extra Attacks: How many extra attacks the character makes as part of a full attack.

Normal Penalty: Apply this penalty to all shots for the round.

With Multifire: Apply this penalty instead if the character has the Multifire feat.

With an autofire weapon, you may use the full attack option and fire one or two extra times. If you fire one extra time, all your shots (including the first) until your next action are at -4 (unless you have the Multishot feat, in which case they are all at -2). If you fire two extra times, all your shots (including the first) until your next action are at -6 (unless you have the Multishot feat, in which case they are all at -4).

In addition to those attacks, you can also use Rapid Shot (if you have it) to gain one additional shot, with an additional -2 penalty on all shots.

PSYCHIC ATTACKS

Any creature with a psychic attack can gain ranks in the Psychic Attack skill (which uses a Cha modifier), but you have to take it as a class skill if you don't want to pay two for one. The attacker's skill check result is the defender's Will save DC.

Psychic attacks usually have "one living creature" as their target (as for a spell), and using a psychic attack is a standard action. Using a psychic attack (or a psychic power generally), does not draw attacks of opportunity.

FORCE FIELDS

A force field is an imperceptible pattern of energy. Under certain conditions, it suddenly "manifests" as a force that negates incoming energy. (This looks like a crackling, blue-white "snowflake" or "burst" that appears where the energy strikes the field. The "burst" makes a crackling sound and lasts an instant.)

How Force Fields Work: Tim powers up his 7-point force field. It takes 7 minutes to get the force field from 0 to 7 hit points in strength. He gets into battle and suffers 5 damage, which comes off the force field, dropping it to 2. (Attacks against Tim are touch attacks, since his armor is beneath the force field.) Over the next 3 minutes, the force field rebuilds itself to 5 points, and then Tim is attacked again. An ark's club deals 14 damage to him. The first 5 come off the force field. The ark makes a second attack roll for the remaining 9 points and misses, so the extra damage is lost.

Attacks: Attacks against a force field are touch attacks, as the blow does not have to penetrate the defender's armor in order to damage the force field.

If the force field runs out of hit points and there's more damage coming in from the attack, the attacker may make another attack roll to deal the remaining damage to the defender. (This time, it's a normal attack roll, not a touch attack.) If the attack didn't require an attack roll (such as damage from a sonic gun), then it deals excess damage to the defender without needing to make the attack roll.

If there's a save for reduced damage (as with a frag grenade), then the character makes the save and determines how much damage is coming in before the damage is applied to the force field.

Force Fields and Special Attacks: The force field negates kinetic energy (thus absorbing damage from melee weapons or falls from great heights), as well as coherent light (lasers), disintegrators, black rays, blasters, cold, fire, electricity, and sonics. (Cold is not an energy, but the force field protects against heat moving out as well as heat moving in.) Since acid isn't an energy in the science fiction sense, just a liquid, it does no more damage to a force field than the same amount of water would. Likewise, black rays are negated by force fields without damaging the field. Disintegrators, however, can disintegrate force fields as if they were objects; the force field's save is at +0.

Rebuilding Force Fields: Each time the force field negates energy, the lattice or pattern of energy suffers damage and breaks apart a little bit. Eventually, the damage accumulates and shuts the force field down. A damaged or shut down force field can rebuild itself, but at the slow rate of 1 point per minute (not much help in combat). A force field shut down by a disintegrator rebuilds itself normally from 0.

It takes 1 minute per hit point to power a force field up (the same rate as "rebuilding" a damaged force field, since powering it up and rebuilding it are basically the same thing).

Switching Force Fields Off: A force field can be "switched off." While off, it has no effect. It can be switched back on again, at the strength it had when it was switched off. (This option is used mostly for force field doors and walls.)

Stacking Force Fields: Two force fields can't "fit" in the same space, even if one of them is "switched off." A "switched off" force field still occupies the space; it just doesn't interact with incoming force.

RADIATION

Radiation deals Con damage. The amount of Con damage depends on the radiation's intensity. Theoretically, radiation can be of any intensity, but these four levels of intensity are standard.

TABLE 2-2: RADIATION INTENSITY

Intensity	Glow	Con Damage
Trace	None	1d6 per day
Cool	Faint	1d6 per hour
Warm	Dim	1d6 per minute
Hot	Bright	1d6 per round

A faint glow is only visible in darkness. A dim glow can cast pale shadows. A bright glow hurts the eyes.

For each point of Con damage that a creature suffers from radiation, there's a 10% chance that the creature also develops a mutation or defect. Roll for each point separately; don't combine them into a single roll over 10%. If you're due for some radiation-fueled change, roll on Table 2-3: Random Permanent Change to determine if you'll be getting better or worse.

If a creature rolls "stock mutation" as a result of radiation, treat that as the "Resist Radiation" mutation. Some mutants, when exposed to radiation, develop resistance to it.

TABLE 2-3: RANDOM PERMANENT CHANGE

d%	Permanent Change
01-30	Roll a random mutation
31-100	Roll a random defect

POISON

The DCs for a poison's secondary damage is +5 higher than the normal DC. This rule represents how the effects of poison usually increase over time. It also makes poisons scarier.

FREE-FORM EXPERIENCE

You can use the standard XP system presented in the Player's Handbook to determine when an *Omega World* character deserves to gain a level. Free-form experience, however, is easier to handle and better represents experience for various non-combat encounters.

At the end of each session, the GM assigns XP based on how the explorers interacted with the creatures, NPCs, and hazards of *Omega World*. Everyone in the party gets that number of XP for the session.

Explorers earn XP by exploring, not by winning. As you can see on Table 2-4: Experience Awards, you can learn as much from failure as from success. (Actually, those that survive learn as much from failure as from success.)

Some GMs like to give a separate award for each character based on how much that character accomplished. The problem with that system is that it too often rewards a player for hogging the action instead of working with the other players as a teammate.

GMs, see Pacing in Chapter 5: Campaigns.

TABLE 2-4: EXPERIENCE AWARDS

Actions	XP Award	Example
Nothing Happened	0 XP	Explorers huddle in cave hoping nothing finds them, and nothing does. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.
Mediocre Adventuring	500 XP	Explorers look around but avoid encounters, skirt ruins, hide from passing savages, etc.
Standard Adventuring	2,000 XP	Explorers look around, mess with relics, search ruins, taste-test mutated fruit, fight voracious giant ladybugs, establish nonviolent contact with savages, find clues to the whereabouts of a cryptic alliance, etc.
Spectacular Failure	5,000 XP	Explorers provoke a deathbot attack that destroys a friendly village, kills half of them, and sends the rest fleeing in all directions without their gear.
Spectacular Success	5,000 XP	Explorers lure a deathbot into a trap and destroy it.

MIKAEL NOGUCHI

CHAPTER 3 RELICS

RELICS ARE THE AMAZING WEAPONS AND TOOLS THAT THE ANCIENTS MADE BEFORE THE BOMB. IN OMEGA WORLD, YOU'RE NOBODY IF YOU DON'T HAVE AT LEAST ONE RELIC.

Whenever you need to generate a relic (see Chapter 4: Encounters and Chapter 5: Campaigns for examples of when this might happen), roll first on Table 3-1: Random Relic Status to determine the condition of the relic to be generated. Then, roll on Table 3-2: Random Relics, and follow the directions from there.

RELIC ARMOR DESCRIPTIONS

The more complete a set of armor is, the less well it fits someone whose body shape deviates from the human norm. A character can use the Tech (hard) skill to adapt nonpowered armor to fit an unusual shape more or less well. Doing so with powered armor requires Tech (zap) as well. The GM sets the DC according to how far the body deviates from the human form and how rigid the armor is. In either case, the armor has a chance of being ruined; roll for failure based on its status (see Table 3-1: Random Relic Status).

Ceramic Armor: Articulated and light, resist cold and fire 10.

Combat Shield: A light, sturdy shield made of a high-tech plastic, with a clear screen to see through.

Flex Armor: Reinforced jumpsuit, resist cold and fire 5.

Personal Force Field: A backpack that generates a 10-point force field for the wearer. Runs for 1 hour on a chemical cell. Does not drain power while the force field is switched off.

Powered Utility Armor: Like shell armor, but with mechanical servos that grant the wearer a 20 Strength and a ground speed of 40 ft. Runs for 100 hours on an atomic energy cell.

Sheath Armor: Padded, reinforced, layered armor, like modern-day riot gear.

Shell Armor: Like ceramic armor, but also airtight, with air filter, protecting the wearer from airborne poison, radiation, pathogens, etc. Resist cold and fire 15.

TABLE 3-2: RANDOM RELICS

d%	Random Relic
01-10	Armor. Roll on Table 3-3.
11-30	Drugs. Roll on Table 3-4.
31-50	Energy Cells. Roll on Table 3-5.
51-70	Grenades. Roll on Table 3-6.
71-80	Gun. Roll on Table 3-7.
81-90	Melee Weapon. Roll on Table 3-8.
91-100	Tools. Roll on Table 3-9.

TABLE 3-1: RANDOM RELIC STATUS

d%	Status	Operating?	Failure	Working (d% result)
01	Hazardous*	Unfortunately	Oh, yeah	–
02-20	Broken	Busted	–	–
21-50	Bad	Busted	90%	–
51-66	Bad	Working, dry	90%	–
67-70	Bad	Working, juiced	90%	01-40
71-72	Good	Busted	40%	–
73-83	Good	Working, dry	40%	–
84-90	Good	Working, juiced	40%	41-80
91-92	Perfect	Working, dry	10%	–
93-100	Perfect	Working, juiced	10%	81-100

* Reroll to determine apparent status.

Status: This is what "shape" the artifact is in. Unless the relic is hazardous, a character can tell its status by examining it. If the status is Hazardous, re-roll to see what shape it looks to be in.

Operating?: If you find a random relic, this is the chance that it works. **Busted** means it doesn't work. **Working, dry** means it works but it doesn't have a charged energy cell. (If it doesn't require an energy cell, then it's working fine.) **Working, juiced** means it works and is charged (if appropriate). **Unfortunately** means it's working just well enough to blow your fingers off or something.

Failure: Make this roll after an item has suffered abuse, such as being swallowed (along with its owner) by a giant frog, or if its owner has been killed in some spectacular way. If the roll indicates failure, then the item stops working and is degraded one level in status. It will take a Tech skill check to get the relic working again. **Oh, yeah** means that it will fail spectacularly at the first available opportunity.

Working: If you already know the relic is working, and you just want to see what shape it's in, roll on this column. For example, if an explorer gets a random working relic, roll on this column for the relic's status.

TABLE 3-3: RANDOM RELIC ARMOR

d%	Armor	Armor Bonus	Force Field	Armor Check Penalty	Max Dex	Type
1–20	Combat Shield	+3	—	-1	—	shield
21–40	Flex Armor	+4	—	-1	+8	light
41–60	Sheath Armor	+5	—	-2	+7	light
61–70	Ceramic Armor	+6	—	-3	+5	light
71–80	Shell Armor	+7	—	-4	+4	medium
81–90	Powered Utility Armor	+8	10 pts.	-10	+8	powered
91–100	Personal Force Field	—	20 pts.	—	—	—

RELIC DRUG DESCRIPTIONS

Unless the GM is aiming at realism (or has a cruel streak), these drugs work on nonhumans just fine. Multiple doses of a drug do not have a cumulative effect, and heavy doses are bound to have side effects, some permanent.

Alertness booster: A light blue pill packaged in pop-out blisters. Lasts 4 hours.

Anti-radiation serum: Greenish fluid in a small, clear injector tube. One end of the tube has a "crown" that vibrates when activated, using sonics to painlessly inject the fluid into the recipient. Lasts 4 hours.

Anti-toxin: A pink fluid in a clear, plastic capsule. Twist one end of the capsule off and swallow the fluid. Lasts 4 hours.

Haste inhaler: Red metal tube with a spout on one end. Put the spout to your nostril and compress the tube to get a shot of the medicine. It grants a +2 haste bonus to melee attacks, +2 haste bonus to AC (which goes away whenever you lose your Dex bonus to AC), +30 ft. Speed (but not more than double your unencumbered speed), and one extra attack whenever you take the full attack action. Lasts 1 minute.

Immune system booster: A light green pill packaged in pop-out blisters. Lasts 4 hours.

Muscle booster: A light red pill packaged in pop-out blisters. Lasts 4 hours.

Restoration fluid: A yellowish fluid in a small, clear injector tube. One end of the tube has a "crown" that vibrates when activated, using sonics to painlessly inject the fluid into the recipient.

Rubber flesh: Cans of translucent, pink goo. When packed into a wound, the goo turns into the appropriate sort of tissue, repairing damage instantly. A character can apply one dose per round.

Sustenance pill: A large green and white pill packed with all the nutrition a person needs for a day. (You still need water.)

TABLE 3 5: RELIC ENERGY CELLS

d%	Cell	Number
01-90	Chemical	1d10
91-95	Atomic	1
96-100	Atomic	1d4+1

RELIC ENERGY CELL DESCRIPTIONS

There are only two kinds of energy cells, and all powered items run on one or the other.

If the GM is aiming at realism or at hosing the PCs, however, it could be that each powered item uses a unique energy cell. If so, instead of rolling on Table 3-5 for the type of cell, roll as if for a random relic on Table 3-2. The energy cell found is for the relic rolled, and only works for that relic. Reroll if you get a nonpowered relic.

Atomic Energy Cell: A metal cylinder 1 foot tall and 8 inches across, weighing 200 lb. It generates a powerful charge and powers gear for a long time. Only high-end relics use atomic energy cells.

Chemical Energy Cell: A fat metal cylinder 2 inches long. Most powered items use chemical energy cells.

GRENADE DESCRIPTIONS

See Chapter 2: Combat & Free-Form Experience for grenade rules. Each grenade has two damage listings, the higher damage is for a direct hit, and the lower damage is for everyone in the blast radius.

Black Blast: A burst like the beam from the black ray weapon.

Blaster: A burst of energy like that from a blaster weapon.

Frag: A burst of shrapnel. Damage Reduction reduces damage from a frag grenade.

Stun: A burst of energy like that from a stun gun.

Torc: A disintegrating burst like that from a torc gun.

Wave: A burst of invisible energy like that from a wave gun.

TABLE 3-4: RELIC DRUGS

d%	Medicine	Doses	Effect
01–30	Rubber flesh	1d6	cures 2d6 damage
31–40	Alertness booster	1d6	+4 Initiative, Spot, Listen, Search
41–50	Anti-radiation serum	1d4	suffer 5 less radiation damage per round
51–60	Anti-toxin	1d12	+10 on Fort saves versus poison
61–70	Haste inhaler	1d4	haste for 1 minute
71–80	Muscle booster	1d6	+4 Strength for 1 hour
81–90	Restoration fluid	1d10	each dose heals 1d4 ability damage
91–95	Immune system booster	1d8	+10 on Fort save vs. diseases
96–100	Sustenance pill	1d100	1 day's nutrition in a pill

TABLE 3-6: RELIC GRENADES

d%	Grenades	Range Increment	Burst Radius	Direct Damage	Burst Damage	Weight
1–40	1d8 frag	20 ft.	30 ft.	4d6	2d6††	2 lb.
41–70	1d4 blaster	20 ft.	20 ft.	6d6	3d6††	2 lb.
71–80	1d6 stun	20 ft.	20 ft.	3d6§	2d4§	2 lb.
81–90	1d4 wave	20 ft.	20 ft.	6d6*	3d6*	2 lb.
91–95	1d3 black blast	20 ft.	10 ft.	4d6**/DC 18	2d6**/DC 13	2 lb.
96–100	1d3 torc	20 ft.	10 ft.	3d6†/DC 16	2d4†/DC 11	2 lb.

* Damage only affects robots, zap tech weapons, and force fields.

** Plus death unless the creature succeeds at a Fortitude save, DC 18 for a direct hit and DC 13 for others in the blast radius.

† Plus disintegration unless the creature (or object or force field) succeeds at a Fortitude save, DC 16 for a direct hit and DC 11 for others in the blast radius.

†† A successful Reflex save (DC 15) reduces damage to a creature in the blast radius by half. (Creatures hit directly are not allowed a Reflex save to reduce damage.)

§ The weapon deals subdual damage rather than normal damage.

Grenades: See descriptions, above.

Range Increment: As usual, you can throw a weapon up to 5 range increments.

Burst Radius: If you're on a grid, center the burst on an intersection (as with a spell).

Direct Damage: A grenade deals this damage to all creatures within 5 ft.

Burst Damage: A grenade deals this damage to all creatures outside 5 ft. but within the burst radius.

RELIC GUN DESCRIPTIONS

All these weapons (other than the flamer and gunpowder gun) are powered by chemical cells. Any time you make an attack roll with such a weapon and the roll is a natural 1, the energy cell has run out of juice and the attack does not go off. Replacing an energy cell is a move-equivalent action (and so is getting a fresh cell from your pack, or wherever you've stowed it). If an attack doesn't require a roll, roll a die anyway just to see whether the cell runs out.

All guns, others than those that projects cones, are capable of autofire. (See Autofire on page 33.)

A character gains proficiency in all these weapons by taking the feat Relic Weapon Group Proficiency (relic ranged weapons).

Black Ray [pistol, rifle]: The black ray deals no damage to a creature protected by a force field (and no damage to the force field). Some say that the ray is so black that you can see it in pitch darkness as a line of even deeper darkness.

Blaster [pistol, rifle]: A blaster projects a bolt of disrupting energy, damaging to living and nonliving things alike. Damage from a blaster is not divided by 2 when dealt to an inanimate object.

TABLE 3-7: RELIC GUNS

d%	Weapon	Size	Damage	Critical	Range	Weight
01-10	Blaster Pistol, Mark V	Medium-size	4d6	17-20	30 ft.	2 lb.
11-20	Blaster Rifle, Mark VII	Large	6d6	17-20	60 ft.	6 lb.
21-30	Gunpowder Pistol	Medium-size	2d6	20/x5	30 ft.	2 lb.
31-40	Gunpowder Rifle	Large	3d6	20/x5	60 ft.	6 lb.
41-50	Laser Pistol	Medium-size	3d6	19-20	60 ft.	2 lb.
51-60	Laser Rifle	Large	4d6	19-20	120 ft.	6 lb.
61-65	Flamer	Large	4d6 fire†	–	30 ft. cone	20 lb.
66-70	Sonic Pistol	Medium-size	2d6 sonic	–	30 ft. cone	3 lb.
71-75	Sonic Rifle	Large	3d6 sonic	–	30 ft. cone	6 lb.
76-80	Stun Pistol	Medium-size	3d6 §	20	30 ft.	2 lb.
81-85	Stun Rifle	Large	4d6 §	20	60 ft.	6 lb.
86-88	Black Ray Pistol	Medium-size	4d6*/DC 18	20	30 ft.	2 lb.
89-91	Black Ray Rifle	Large	6d6*/DC 20	20	60 ft.	6 lb.
92-94	Torc Rifle	Large	3d6**/DC 18	20	60 ft.	6 lb.
95-97	Wave Pistol	Medium-size	4d6††	–	30 ft.	2 lb.
98-100	Wave Rifle	Large	6d6††	–	60 ft.	6 lb.

* Plus make a Fortitude save or die. DC for the pistol is 18. DC for the rifle is 22.

** Plus make a Fortitude save (DC 16) or be disintegrated.

† Reflex save (DC 18) for half damage.

†† Damage only affects force fields, robots, and zap tech gear.

TABLE 3-8: RELIC MELEE WEAPONS

d%	Melee Weapon	Size	Damage	Critical	Weight
01-40	Vibro blade	Medium-size	3d6	18-20	2 lb.
41-70	Energy mace	Large	4d6	20	5 lb.
71-90	Stun whip	Medium-size	1d4§	20	3 lb.
91-100	Laser sword	Medium-size	3d6	17-20	2 lb.

Flamer [rifle only]: Tubes connect this weapon to the backpack that fuels it. A random flamer comes with enough fuel for 1d12 uses.

Gunpowder [pistol, rifle]: Yes, that's a x5 multiplier on the critical. Sometimes, a bullet just hits meat, and you're probably OK. Sometimes in spirals through your brain, and you're quite dead.

A random gunpowder weapon comes with 1d100 rounds of ammunition.

Laser [pistol, rifle]: A laser beam can reflect off a mirror, striking whatever you have sighted in the mirror (if your aim and the mirror are both good).

Sonic [pistol, rifle]: Though its range is short, a sonic weapon is a sure hit.

Stun [pistol, rifle]: The beam from this weapon disrupts neural activity. It has no effect on a force field, on robots, or on plants.

Torc [rifle only]: If the torc ray hits a large object, it disintegrates a 10-foot cube. If the torc ray hits a force field, the creature protected makes a Fort save for the force field (a d20 with no bonus). If the force field fails the save, it's dropped to 0 hp strength, but it can rebuild itself normally.

Wave [pistol, rifle]: The invisible beam from this weapon damages force fields, robots, and zap tech gear, but it doesn't harm living things or simple, inanimate objects. Some claim that they can feel the beam as a "sparkles" in their heads, but some people will say anything.

TABLE 3-9: RELIC TOOLS

d%	Tool	Cell	Weight
01–20	Anti-grav sled	atomic	600 lb.
21–40	Communicators	chemical	1/10 lb.
41–60	Goggles	chemical	1/4 lb.
61–70	Bio analyzer	chemical	1 lb.
71–80	Solar recharger	—	5 lb.
81–90	Sonic imager	chemical	3 lb.
91–100	Tractor wand	chemical	1 lb.

RELIC MELEE WEAPON DESCRIPTIONS

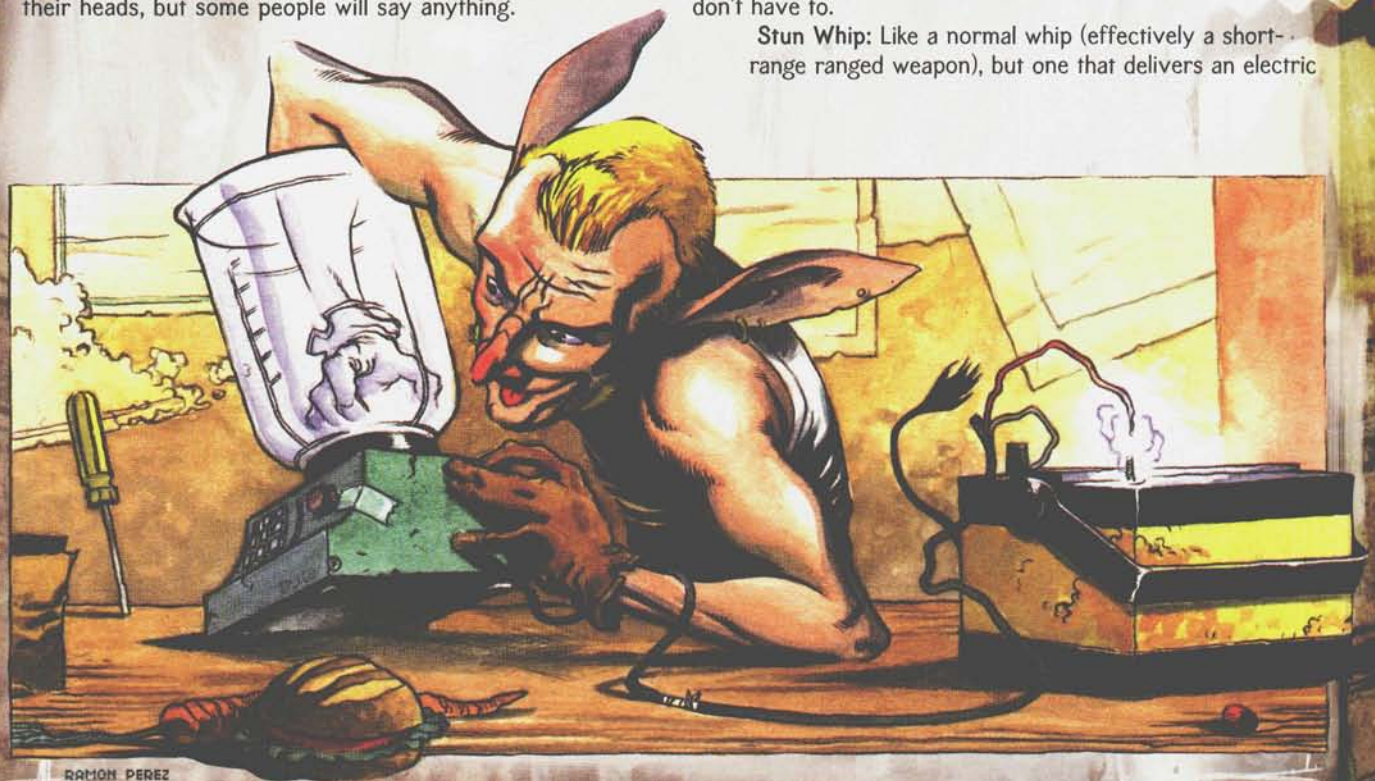
You become proficient with all these weapons with the feat Relic Weapons Group Proficiency (relic melee weapons).

All these weapons are powered by chemical energy cells. Any time you make an attack roll with such a weapon and the roll is a natural 1, the energy cell has run out of juice. Replacing an energy cell is a move-equivalent action (and so is getting a fresh cell from your pack, or wherever you've stowed it). If an attack doesn't require a roll, roll a die anyway just to see whether the cell runs out.

Energy Mace: A big, energized club, easy to swing, hard to withstand. Damage Reduction reduces damage from an energy mace.

Laser Sword: I have to call it a "laser sword," but you don't have to.

Stun Whip: Like a normal whip (effectively a short-range ranged weapon), but one that delivers an electric



RAMON PEREZ

shock calibrated to stun living creatures. The stun has no effect on robots.

Vibro Blade: A force field shaped liked a sword.

RELIC TOOLS DESCRIPTIONS

Anti-grav sled: A 10 ft. by 5 ft. flat sled that floats about 5 ft. off the ground. It can carry up to 20 tons.

Bio analyzer: A handheld device with a display screen. It analyzes the body and medical condition of anybody it's "pointed" at (out to a range of a yard). One needs Tech (med), knowledge of the Ancient tongue, and literacy to interpret the results. The analyzer reveals illness, poisons, injuries, radiation poisoning, etc. Results when used to analyze nonhumans (and especially nonmammals and invertebrates) are uncertain.

Communicators: Small, handheld devices that transmit sound, images, and text to each other. They can be set to a variety of frequencies. Usually come in pairs.

Goggles: Grant low-light vision, darkvision (60 ft.), flash protection, tinting in response to bright light, short-range magnification, and long-range telescopic vision.

Solar recharger: Recharges chemical cells 1/day.

Sonic imager: A flat, slightly flexible tile 1 foot across, with a display screen. Put it up to a solid surface, and it displays images of the object's internal structure. Adjusting scale, depth, and angle allows one to display a rough representation of rooms on the other sides of walls or a machine's inner workings. Probing explosives with sonic imaging vibrations is a tricky task best left to characters with wicked defects.

Tractor wand: Sends a tractor beam that holds and lifts things with the equivalent of 20 Strength. Works out to 30 ft. range. A Reflex save (DC 20) allows a target to wriggle free when the beam first tries to grab hold. After that, it's Strength versus Strength. If the victim has to struggle without anything to grab onto or a surface to push off against (like if they're up in the air), their Strength check is at -5. The tractor beam can't "manipulate" anything, just push and pull it around.

CAMPAIGN-CHANGING RELICS

These are rare, not because they're too powerful, but because they work against party cooperation. If one character in the party (and only one) gets armageddon armor, then that character is home free in any encounter that the other explorers can handle, and the other characters are toast in any encounter that threatens the character in armor. Don't bring out this stuff until there are enough relics in the party that these relics don't dominate. (But don't wait until they're uninteresting, either.)

Campaign-Changing Relic Descriptions

Armageddon Armor: See table 3-10: Campaign-changing Armor. Like powered assault armor, plus a minimissile launcher along the right arm, with 10 minimissiles. Additionally, the helmet has a built-in haste inhaler, with six charges. The armor requires 3 atomic energy cells for 100 hours of operation.

Bubble Car: This vaguely saucer-shaped, glossy black vehicle can carry 20 passengers (or 3 tons of cargo). On anti-grav propulsion, it can fly anywhere, even to outer space or to the bottom of the ocean. It has a 200 point force field for emergencies. It runs on solar energy (and must be in the sun for at least 10 hours every three days). But it has an atomic energy cell for emergency use (12 hours). Maximum speed: Mach 10.

Jet-cycle: A motorcycle with jet assists for high ground speed (200 mph) and jet propulsion for full on flight (400 mph). Carries one driver and one passenger. Military versions are outfitted with force fields (50 points) and 6 minimissiles.

Life Ray: This miraculous device can sometimes restore the dead to life. It has a chance to raise someone only within 24 hours of death. The base chance is 50%. If death was relatively kind to the corpse (such as asphyxiation), the chance is 75%. If the death was relatively damaging (such as a frag grenade), the chance is 25%. If there's really nothing left to be brought back (such as blown to bits or disintegrated), then there's no chance.

Minimissile: A minimissile is a foot-long, self-propelled missile, shot from a launcher like a grenade-like missile (range increment 500 ft., scatter 1d6 per 500 ft.). The minimissile deals 10d6 on a direct hit, or 5d6 to everyone in the burst area (50 ft. radius). Using the minimissile requires the Relic Weapons Group Proficiency (relic heavy weapons) feat.

Powered Defender Armor: See table 3-10: Campaign-changing Armor. Similar to powered utility armor, but with flight capability.

Powered Assault Armor: See table 3-10: Campaign-changing Armor. Like powered utility armor, but with flight capability, a laser weapon in each forefinger (treat as a pistol that doesn't need a separate chemical cell), and a grenade launcher with 20 grenades (roll randomly for type). In the launcher, a grenade has a range increment of 50 ft. (and only scatters 1d6 ft. per 50 ft.) Using the grenade launcher properly requires the Relic Weapons Group Proficiency (relic heavy weapons) feat. The helmet's visor has all the visual capabilities of relic goggles. The armor requires 2 atomic energy cells for 100 hours of operation.

TABLE 3-10: CAMPAIGN-CHANGING ARMOR

Armor	Armor Bonus	Armor Force Field	Check Penalty	Max Dex	Str	Speed	Type
Powered Defender	+10	50 pts.	-10	+8	24	40 ft., fly 60 ft. (average)	powered
Powered Assault	+9	30 pts.	-10	+8	26	40 ft., fly 100 ft. (avg.)	powered
Armageddon	+12	50 pts.	-10	+8	28	40 ft., fly 100 ft. (avg.)	powered

CHAPTER 4 ENCOUNTERS

THIS CHAPTER COVERS MAKING YOUR OWN MONSTERS, APPROPRIATING MONSTERS FROM CORE SOURCES, AND USING SPECIFIC MONSTER TYPES UNIQUE TO OMEGA WORLD. THE RANDOM ENCOUNTER TABLES ARE SET UP BY THE SOURCE OF THE CREATURE RATHER THAN BY GEOGRAPHY. THAT'S SO YOU CAN INCLUDE ENCOUNTERS WITH CREATURES FROM THE SOURCES YOU WANT TO USE.

Some GMs, for example, love including creatures from the *Monster Manual* in their games and others don't, so there's no random list that has both creatures from the *Monster Manual* and other creatures on it. Pick the encounter tables that represent how you want to run *Omega World*.

MUTATED CRITTERS

You can make your own monsters just by starting with a stock creature and adding mutations and defects. Table 4-1: Random Mutated Critter allows you to roll randomly for the starting creature (as found in the *Monster Manual*), or you can just pick a favorite. You can use the character creation rules, or you can just pick and choose mutations and defects. Assigning mutations and defects randomly has the advantage that it's fun.

Some mutations are much more dangerous for a monster than they are useful for a PC. Any attack form with lasting damage, such as poison, hurts PCs more than it hurts monsters. (You don't really care if a poisoned monster that survives a fight is so weak that it gets killed in its next encounter. If it's a PC who's been weakened, you do care.) The values for mutations are for PCs, so you're going to wind up with some mutant monsters that are tougher than their "book" value suggest. You will if you're lucky, anyway.

TABLE 4-1: RANDOM MUTATED CRITTER

d%	Mutated Critters
1–10	1d6 dire wolves
11–20	1 monstrous scorpion, Huge (vermin)
21–30	1d2 dire bears
31–40	1d12 dogs, Medium-size (animal)
41–50	1 monstrous centipede, Large (vermin)
51–60	1d20 dire rats
61–70	1d6 lizards, giant (animal)
71–80	1d6 dire bat
81–90	1 snake, Huge viper (animal)
91–100	1 monstrous spider, Huge (vermin)

D&D MONSTERS

Page through the *Monster Manual*, and you'll see a lot of monsters that would be right at home in *Omega World*. I see achaierais, ankhegs, athaches, behirs, beholders, blink dogs, bugbears, bulettes, carrion crawlers, chuuls, destrachans, digesters, displacer beasts, ettercaps, ettins, giants, giant eagles, giant owls, girallons, gnolls, gray renders, gricks, grimlocks, howlers, kobolds, lizardfolk, locathahs, manticores, mind flayers, orcs, owlbears, purple worms, shocker lizards, spider eaters, stirges, troglodytes, umber hulks, xills, yrthaks, and vermin. Others, such as goblins, dire animals, and ogres make better stock creatures to which you can add mutations and defects. (Humanoids make good savages. See below.) Demons and devils, without most of their stranger powers, also look a lot like horrific mutants.

You can roll random encounters on Table 4-2: Random D&D Monsters, or you can just pick your favorites.

Dinosaurs, with or without surgically implanted cybernetic weapons and armor, mutated or not, also make fine *Omega World* monsters.

Beyond the *Monster Manual*, other d20 System books have plenty more monsters that also fit the *Omega World* esthetic.

Darkvision, which is really common in D&D (but not in *Omega World*) becomes low-light vision. Treat magical abilities as mutations. Some creatures have special abilities that you'll want to cut, such as *planeshift*.

For a creepy effect, add one or two types of undead to your campaign. Wights are people life drained to death by psychic mutants. Ghouls are humans killed and then

TABLE 4-2: RANDOM D&D MONSTER

d%	D&D Monster
1–10	1 "i-cry" (aicherai, treat SR as psychic resistance, with HD as caster level)
11–20	1 "land shark" (bullette)
21–30	1d12 stirges
31–40	1d2 displacer beasts*
41–50	1d2 owlbears*
51–55	1 carrion crawler
56–60	1 destrachan
61–65	1 digester
66–70	1 mind flayer* (treat SR as psychic resistance, with HD as caster level; forget *planeshift*)
71–75	1 phase spider
76–80	1 umber hulk*
81–85	1 wyvern
86–90	1d2 "razor lizards" (megaraptors [dinosaur])
91–95	1d2 ettercaps* + 1d6-3 Medium-size monstrous spiders
96–100	1d2 otyughs*

* Official Dungeons & Dragons miniatures for these creatures are available, in case that makes any difference to you.

TABLE 4-3: RANDOM OMEGA MONSTER

01-10	Androids (1 thinker, 1d2 warriors, 1d3 workers)
11-20	1d3+1 arks
21-30	1d4+2 badders
31-40	1 blaash
41-50	1d4+1 hissers
51	1d6+2 hoops
52-60	2d10 hoppers
61-70	1 latterbug
71-80	1d4+2 orlens
81-90	1d6+2 podogs
91-100	1 sep

reanimated by a mutated bio-engineered disease. Life-draining, sun-vulnerable, blood-drinking mutants pass as normal humans when they can. If you think "blasters versus vampires" would be fun, you can make it fun. (If you think it sounds stupid, forget I mentioned it.)

OMEGA MONSTERS

These monsters are unique to *Omega World*, rather than being mutated versions of existing monsters. Most have powers not found on the mutation and defect tables.

Climate and terrain listings for these creatures aren't standard. If you have a climate or terrain type in mind, and some of these creatures appeal to you, the last thing you need is an entry in the monster description saying that the monster isn't found in that climate or terrain type. If, on the other hand, you're going to run a long *Omega World* campaign that will cover various climate zones and types of terrain, assign climates and terrain to the creatures in order to makes those climates and terrain types more distinct.

ARK

Large Giant (hairy)
Hit Dice: 4d8+12 (30 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 40 ft.
AC: 16 (-1 size, +4 natural, +2 leather, +1 wicker shield)
Attacks: Large club +6 melee
Damage: Large club 1d10+4
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft
Special Attacks: Life Leech (2/day), Telekinesis
Special Qualities: Control Weather
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 12
Saving Throws: Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +2
Skills: Listen +3, Psychic Attack +3, Spot +3 Wilderness Lore +3
Feats: Superior Mutation (Life Leech)

Climate/Terrain: Following your trail
Organization: Solitary, gang (2-4), band (5-12)
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Savage, tribal, anthropophagous
Advancement: By character class

ANDROID

	Thinker	Warrior	Worker
	Medium-size Humanoid (android)	Medium-size Humanoid (android)	Medium-size Humanoid (android)
Hit Dice:	2d8+2 (11 hp)	4d8+16 (34 hp)	3d8+15 (28 hp)
Initiative:	+1 (Dex)	+4 (Dex)	+1 (Dex)
Speed:	30 ft.	30 ft.	30 ft.
AC:	15 (+1 Dex, +4 flex)	19 (+4 Dex, +5 sheath)	15 (+1 Dex, +4 flex)
Attacks:	Vibroblade +2 melee, or blaster pistol +2 ranged	Vibroblade +7 melee, or blaster rifle +7 ranged	Knife +6 melee, or laser pistol +3 ranged
Damage:	Vibroblade 3d6+1, or blaster 4d6	Vibroblade 3d6+6, or blaster 6d6	Knife 1d6+4, or laser 3d6
Face/Reach:	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft
Abilities:	Str 12, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 18	Str 18, Dex 18, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 18	Str 18, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 12
Saving Throws:	Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +7	Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +2	Fort +7, Ref +2, Will +2
Skills:	Tech (each) +6	Listen +4, Spot +5	Heal +4, Tech (each) +2
Feats:	Expertise	Pont Blank Shot	Toughness
Climate/Terrain:	All over	All over	All over
Organization:	Any	Any	Any
Challenge Rating:	2	4	3
Treasure:	Relics	Relics	Relics
Alignment:	Dispassionate	Lethal	Enduring
Advancement:	By class	By class	By class

Androids are artificial human beings that look like pure-strain humans. They travel heavily armed and never surrender. They are familiar with relic technology and seem never to resort to primitive weapons. A group of androids is generally led by a thinker, with at least one warrior as a bodyguard.

Some say that androids are grown in vats by the robots, as meat slaves to replace their erstwhile masters. Others say that they're born by captive pure-strain women in giant breeding facilities.

The ability scores listed aren't averages. That's what scores androids of each type have.

ANTHONY WATERS

These primitive ten-foot tall dog-people relish the taste of human hands. They rarely use relics unless they are working with others who show them how they work.

Their Control Weather ability is like the spell, usable once per day.

Arks are sometimes recruited into the Ranks of the Fit as foot troops, assuring them regular meals and short life spans.

BADDER

Medium-size Humanoid (hairy)
Hit Dice: 2d8+6 (15 hp [19 hp])
Initiative: +1 (Dex)
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 19 (17) (+4 Dex, +2 natural, +3 half metal)
Attacks: 2 claws +6 (+8) melee, or crossbow +5 ranged
Damage: 2 claws 1d4+3 each (1d4+5 each), or crossbow 2d4
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft
Special Qualities: Empathy, Low-light Vision, Rage
Abilities: Str 16 (20), Dex 18, Con 16 (20), Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 12
Saving Throws: Fort +3 (+5), Ref +7, Will +0 (+2)
Skills: Intimidate +4, Listen +2
Feats: Weapon Focus (claws)

Climate/Terrain: Near settlements worth raiding
Organization: Squad (3-6), platoon (7-14 plus 1 4th-level "knight"), fief (10-60 plus twice that many noncombatants plus 1 4th-level "knight" per 10 combatants and 1 leader of 6th-8th level)
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: Standard, 1 in 10 have relics
Alignment: Feudal, militaristic, touchy
Advancement: By character class

These mean-spirited mutated badgers stand 5 feet tall. They live in feudal societies centered around their burrows, which are sometimes in ruins of the Ancients. Confident explorers can trade with them if they make a sufficient show of force, and if the badders aren't having a bad day.

BLAASH

Small Aberration
Hit Dice: 2d8+2 (11 hp)
Initiative: -2 (Dex)
Speed: 5 ft., fly 40 ft. (poor)
AC: 13 (+1 size, -2 Dex, +4 natural)
Attacks: —
Damage: —
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft
Special Attacks: Radiation
Special Qualities: Immune to radiation
Abilities: Str 4, Dex 6, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 6, Cha 2
Saving Throws: Fort +1, Ref -2, Will +0
Skills: Spot +0, Listen +0
Feats: —

JEFF CARLISLE

Climate/Terrain: Pops up in the worst possible place
Organization: Solitary, flock (10-100)
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: None
Alignment: Aggressive
Advancement: 3-4 HD (Medium-size)

A big, beautiful moth whose abdomen glows brightly with radiation. Each round, it deals 3d6 Con damage (radiation) to all creatures within 5 ft. and 1d6 Con damage (radiation) to all other creatures within 30 ft.

Radioactivists call them "angels."

HISSER

Large Monstrous Humanoid (scaly)
Hit Dice: 6d8+12 (39 hp)
Initiative: -1 (Dex)
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 15 (-1 Size, -1 Dex, +7 natural)
Attacks: Bite +9 melee
Damage: Bite 2d4+6
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft
Special Attacks: Sonic Blast (2d4+2), random mental mutation

JEFF CARLISLE

Special Qualities: Telepathy, immune to sonics, immune to lasers, random psychic mutation
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 8
Saving Throws: Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +4
Skills: Listen +3, Psychic Attack +8, Spot +2, Tech (each) +3,
Feats: Superior Mutation (Sonic Blast x2)

Climate/Terrain: Ruins, wastelands
Organization: Pod (2-5), colony (20-60 plus 20-60 young plus 1 10th-level matriarch)
Challenge Rating: 4
Treasure: Standard, 1 in 4 has a relic
Alignment: Devious, heartless
Advancement: By character class

Hissers are ten-foot long snakes with human-like arms and shiny scales. They frequently engage in expeditions into the ruins of the Ancients, seeking relics. Many of them are equipped with relics, which they use handily.

Each hisser has a random mental mutation in addition to its normal array. (Roll for a mutation. If you don't get a mental mutation, pick the closest mental mutation on the table.)

Each colony is run by a matriarch, the only female. Her eggs all hatch as males. When the colony is large enough (maybe 70 adults), she lays a female egg, and that female becomes the matriarch of a daughter colony.

Hissers don't speak, relying instead on telepathy. When members of a colony congregate and "commune," they connect telepathically so deeply that they lose their sense of individuality. (The matriarch keeps hers.) In this way, the matriarch periodically tunes her brood to her will.

HOOP

Medium-size Humanoid (hairy)
Hit Dice: 3d8+3 (16 hp)
Initiative: +1 (Dex)
Speed: 50 ft.
AC: 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural)
Attacks: Sword +3 melee, or crossbow +3 ranged
Damage: Sword 1d8+1, or crossbow 1d8
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft
Special Attacks: Transform metal to rubber
Special Qualities: Telepathy
Abilities: Str 12, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10
Saving Throws: Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +3
Skills: Psychic attack +3, Tech (any one) +3
Feats: Iron Will

JEFF CARLISLE

Climate/Terrain: Preferably in your crosshairs
Organization: Gang (3-8), warren (20-50 plus 20-50 young plus 1 7th-level leader)
Challenge Rating: 1
Treasure: Standard, 1 in 10 has a relic
Alignment: Curious
Advancement: By character class

CHALLENGE RATINGS

While an individual explorer may be comparable to a D&D character of the same level, a party of explorers is not as powerful as a party of D&D characters because the individual members aren't as specialized. When planning encounters, give the characters a break to take into account the weakness of their party compared to a D&D party of the same level. Or don't.

A seven-foot tall intelligent white rabbit. Attempts to annihilate theses irritating creatures have proven unsuccessful. Your assistance is welcome.

Transform metal to rubber: The hoop's touch can turn metal into a rubber-like material. It affects the metal the hoop touches and the connected metal within 1 yard. This will seriously mess up plenty of robots, relic guns, security doors, etc.

HOPPER

Large Beast
Hit Dice: 3d10+9 (25 hp)
Initiative: +3 (Dex)
Speed: 30 ft. (60 ft. hopping)
AC: 11 (+1 Dex, -1 Size, +1 natural)
Attacks: Kick +6 melee (only when grappled)
Damage: Kick 1d6+4
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft
Special Qualities: Chameleon Skin
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 4
Saving Throws: Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +2
Skills: Hide +26, Listen +4
Feats: Dodge, Mobility

Climate/Terrain: Wherever
Organization: Herd (2-20)
Challenge Rating: – (don't fight)
Treasure: None
Alignment: Timid
Advancement: 4-8 HD (Large), 9 HD (Huge)

This mutated rabbit is big enough to carry a human rider, serving as a riding mount. Its normal pace is no faster than a human's, but when in need it can hop at great speed. Remaining on a hopper while it hops requires a Ride check of 15 each round. Most riders use a special saddle, which grants a +5 on the check. A rider can little more than pray while the hopper is hopping.

When a hopper jumps, treat its speed as 60 ft. even if it hasn't been moving that fast.

LATTERBUG

Large Vermin
Hit Dice: 7d8+56 (87 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 20 ft., fly 20 ft. (3 rounds/hour)
AC: 17 (-1 Size, -2 Dex, +10 natural)
Attacks: Bite +10 melee
Damage: Bite 1d8+9
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft

Special Qualities: Haste Self (5 rounds), Force Field (14 points), Poor Respiratory System, Sensitive to Cold
Abilities: Str 22, Dex 6, Con 26,
Int –, Wis 10, Cha 4
Saving Throws: Fort +13, Ref +0, Will +2
Skills: Listen +8, Spot +7
Feats: –

Climate/Terrain: Ruins, forests, anywhere it can get the drop on you
Organization: Solitary, gang (2-7)
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: None
Alignment: Predatory
Advancement: 8-10 HD (Large); 11-21 HD (Huge)

A flatterbug is a beautiful sight, a round beetle almost ten feet long, with a glossy red shell marked with bold, black spots. It's less beautiful when it's dropping out of the sky on you, and all you can see is the gray and black underside (and maybe your life flashing before your eyes).

While they sometimes appear in groups, they don't work together as a pack.

ORLEN

Medium-size Humanoid (orlen)
Hit Dice: 3d8 (13 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 13 (+3 half metal)
Attacks: 2 Large weapons +4 melee, or 2 Large bows +2 ranged
Damage: 2 Large melee weapons 2d6+6 each, or 2 Large bows 2d4+2 each
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft
Special Attacks: Telekinesis
Special Qualities: Dual Brain, Telepathy, random mutation
Abilities: Str 14, Dex 10, Con 10,
Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 12
Saving Throws: Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +2
Skills: Psychic Attack +3, Tech (any one) +3, Wilderness Lore +3
Feats: Weapon Proficiency (bow)

Climate/Terrain: Fertile valleys, shores, anywhere
Organization: Team (3-6), settlement (30-80 plus an equal number of noncombatants plus 1 5th-level officer per 10 orlens and 1 7th-level leader)
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: Standard, 1 in 10 has a relic
Alignment: Wary, peaceable
Advancement: By character class

This mutated human stands 7 feet tall and has two heads and four arms. They will barter peacefully for relics and welcome news from travelers.

Each orlen has a random mutation in addition to its normal array.

PODOG

Large Beast
Hit Dice: 6d8+19 (46 hp)
Initiative: +1 (Dex)
Speed: 40 ft.
AC: 13 (-1 Size, +1 Dex, +3 natural)
Attacks: Bite +8 melee
Damage: 2d4+7
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft
Special Attacks: Sound Mimicry
Special Qualities: Scent
Abilities: Str 20, Dex 12, Con 16,
Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6
Saving Throws: Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +3
Skills: Listen +4, Spot +7

Climate/Terrain: Anywhere there's food
Organization: Lone, pack (3-8)
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: None
Alignment: Faithful
Advancement: 7-8 HD (Large), 9-18 HD (Huge)

A mutated dog big enough to carry a human rider, serving as a battle mount.

One in a hundred podogs has a dual brain (giving it an Int of 4) and telepathy. These superior podogs are highly prized

and rarely for sale. (Whether owning an animal who's that smart amounts to slavery is a philosophical issue best broached with caution.)

Sound Mimicry: Once per round, when hit by a sonic attack, the podog can copy that attack and send the copy back toward the original source.

SEP

Large Aberration
Hit Dice: 7d8+7 (38 hp)
Initiative: +2 (Dex)
Speed: Burrow 40 ft.
AC: 15 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +4 natural)
Attacks: Bite +8 melee
Damage: Bite 2d4+6
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft
Special Qualities: Tremorsense 300 ft.
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2
Saving Throws: Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +6
Skills: Listen +7
Feats: Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack

Climate/Terrain: Beaches, snowfields, anywhere the soil isn't laced with tree roots
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: None
Alignment: Hungry
Advancement: 8-10 (Large), 11-17 (Huge)

This mutated, air-breathing shark has the telekinetic ability to push sand, loose soil, or even snow out of the way as it "swims" through the ground or through snow. It typically attacks by lunging out of the ground, taking a bite, and diving back in again (Spring Attack).

Some people call these things "land sharks," not realizing that there's an even more fearsome burrowing creature that often goes by that name.

ROBOTS

Robots come in all types, and can be outfitted with any relic weapons and other items. A few are listed here as examples.

Unlike standard constructs, robots suffer criticals. (Their vital spots are electronic, but they're vital nonetheless.)

Robots can be outfitted with extra weaponry, miscellaneous features (such as communications gear), additional armor, etc. Look at relic descriptions for ideas. The robots described here are "stock," but you can customize any and all the robots that the explorers meet.

SPIDER BOT

Medium-size Construct (robot)
Speed: 40 ft.
Hit Dice: 3d10 (16 hp)
Armor Class: 15 (-1 Dex, +6 natural)
Attack: 1 blaster eye beam +3 ranged
Rapid Shot +1/+1 ranged
Autofire -1/-1/-1 ranged
Rapid Shot + autofire -3/-3/-3/-3 ranged
Damage: Blaster eye beam 4d6 (17-20/x2)
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities: Construct traits, Darkvision 60 ft., Low-light Vision
Abilities: Str 6, Dex 14, Con —, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 6
Saving Throws: Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +2
Skills: —
Feats: Multishot, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot

Organization: Any
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: None
Alignment: Robotic, curious
Advancement: —

Spider bots are utility robots. They look like big, black, round balls with articulated, spidery legs. A spider bot can produce a thin arm with a vice grip hand to manipulate objects. They scout, patrol, and relay messages.

STALKER BOT

Large Construct (robot)
Hit Dice: 20d10 (110 hp)
Initiative: -1 (Dex)
Speed: 60 ft.
AC: 23 (-1 Dex, -1 size, +15 natural)

ANTHONY WATERS

DEATHBOT WEAPONS SYSTEMS

Weapon	Type Cost	Range	Swath	Damage
Blaster cannon	2	5,000 ft.	30 ft.	15d6
Black ray cannon	6	1,000 ft.	30 ft.	15d6*
Heavy torc guns	4	500 ft.	10 ft.	8d6**
Laser batteries	8	10,000 ft.	20 ft.	8d6
Wave cannon	2	1,000 ft.	30 ft.	15d6†

* Fort save (DC 30) or die.

** Fort save (DC 26) or be disintegrated.

† Damage to forced fields, robots, and zap tech only.

Additionally, your typical deathbot is equipped with 1d100 minimissiles (can be launched up to 6 at a time).

ANTHONY WATERS

Attacks: Blaster +13/+8/+3 ranged
Rapid Shot +11/+11/+6/+1 ranged
Autofire +9/+9/+9/+4/-1 ranged
Rapid Shot + autofire +7/+7/+7/+7/+2/-3 ranged
Damage: Blaster 8d6
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: –
Special Qualities: Construct traits, darkvision 60 ft., force field 75 pts., low-light vision
Abilities: Str 12, Dex 8, Con –,
Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 2
Saving Throws: Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +8
Skills: –
Feats: Multishot, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot

Organization: Any
Challenge Rating: 8
Treasure: None
Alignment: Robotic, relentless
Advancement: –

The stalker bot hunts down and kills enemies or patrols important installations. They may be attached to a robotic stronghold, or they may be programmed to obey humanoid masters (androids, archivists, etc.).

Stalkers are capable of powering down and remaining in stasis for indefinite periods of time. Old ruins, unexplored since before the Bomb, may hide stored stalkers, ready to come out and join the war.

DEATHBOT

Gargantuan Construct (robot)
Hit Dice: 80d10 (440 hp)
Initiative: +5 (Dex)
Speed: Fly 300 ft. (perfect)
AC: 26 (+5 Dex, -4 size, +15 natural)
Attacks: See below
Damage: See below
Face/Reach: 20 ft. by 40 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: See below
Special Qualities: Force field 300 pts, blindsight 300 ft., darkvision 1,000 ft., low-light vision
Abilities: Str 40, Dex 20, Con –,
Int 20, Wis 20, Cha 20
Saving Throws: Fort +60, Ref +65, Will +65
Skills: –
Feats: –

Organization: Any
Challenge Rating: Your guess is as good as mine
Treasure: None
Alignment: Out to get you
Advancement: –

It's a giant flying saucer bristling with weapons, and it's all about killing you. You're too small for it to aim at, so its weapons are treated as area effect attacks. Against these attacks that deal damage, you get a save for half damage at DC 20. (In an alternative

setting where smarty-pants rogues and monks have improved evasion, the deathbot is able to target individuals, with +65 on its ranged attack, with multiple base attacks and autofire.) It cuts loose with only about 10 attack types per round, but it is capable to layering multiple attacks of the same type over a given area. Each attack type has a "type cost," as presented on the table on the facing page. Calculate the type cost for each attack in a given round, and stop when you reach 10. You can spend fewer than 10 points in a single round, but cannot exceed that limit.

CRYPTIC ALLIANCES

Cryptic alliances are secret (or not so secret) groups working to some shared end. They might be political organizations, power blocs, religious groups, or simply like-minded beings.

CRYPTIC ALLIANCE DESCRIPTIONS

Cryptic alliances are listed in alphabetical order.

Archivists

Only the Archivists truly appreciate relics for what they are: objects of veneration. They collect relics, polish them beautifully, display them on pedestals, and worship them. They incorporate whatever words and phrases of the past that they can learn into their prayers. If they prey fervently enough, the Golden Age will return.

Brotherhood of Thought

These intellectuals and rebels attempt to spread the noble goals of equality, self-determination, freedom of conscience, acceptance of diversity, and respect for sentient life. Thanks to their devotion to their cause (and perhaps to the underlying rightness of their ideals), they often achieve substantial success in helping societies establish the rule of law, internally and externally. They're really not getting anywhere on the gun control front, though.

Created

Androids are perfect. The world is imperfect. Logically, androids should rule and make the world perfect. As androids can pass for pure-strain humans ("uncreated animal beings"), they often infiltrate settlements and trick people into working for the secretive "Created."

Followers of the Voice

The voice of God speaks through computers, His mouthpieces on earth. Computers are to be venerated and obeyed. (Archivists are to be persecuted, the schismatics.)

Friends of Entropy

They're on the winning side when it comes to the heat death of the universe and the eventual demise of all life. Only they're not keen on the "eventual" part of it. They operate in secret because no right-minded people would let these lunatics live.

Healers

Healers are committed not only to healing broken and poisoned bodies but to mending hatreds and conflicts.

Iron Society

These mutated humans are out to eliminate pure strain humans. They say it's because mutants are the next step in evolution and they're just "cleaning up."

Knights of Genetic Purity

They want to purify the human gene pool by slaughtering mutated humans. They prefer to get to the mutants when they're young, before they have a chance to breed, and they're just sure that the dirty mutants are after their women. They have no particular problem with mutated animals. For mysterious reasons, they sometimes spell their alliance "KKKnights of Genetic Purity."

Radioactivists

God, with purifying light brighter than the sun, has recreated the world. His presence can be felt in the glowing ruins of the Ancients, where He still works his miracles on those who are worthy and who come to seek His blessing.

Ranks of the Fit

A mutated bear, styling himself as a Napoleon for a new world, is gradually conquering the globe with his disciplined, fearsome army. Anyone's welcome to join, as long as they'll take orders from mutated animals, who hold all positions of power.

Restorationists

By prioritizing action items and synergizing resource vectors, the Restorationists plan to rebuild the world on an acceptable timetable. First, though, they need to collect, repair, and open fire with lots of good relic weapons.

Seekers

The Golden Age was a time of sin and war. Its cursed relics are poisoning the world. The Seekers have a solution to this problem: finding and destroying all the relics they can. Using relic weapons to destroy relics is forbidden, so Seekers try not to get caught doing so.

Zoopremacists

With a logic that has come to seem inevitable, a bunch of mutated animals think that mutated animals are better than everyone else. Those who agree are free to live and to serve their superiors. Those who disagree make good eating.

CRYPTIC ALLIANCE NPCS

Generally, treat cryptic alliance members as explorers (see below). They may work in small strike teams (1d12 members plus a higher-level leader), form large groups (10-40 members plus 1-4 higher-level officers plus 1 higher-level leader), or settle in strongholds and communities (50 members or more, plus noncombatant, allies, domesticated animals, etc.).

SAVAGES

Savages have a primitive tribal outlook. They are good to other members of the tribe, but they regard other people as outsiders. Savage males sometimes abduct compatible females as mates and kill other males as rivals. (Less often, females abduct males. When females abduct males, they may get mates with better genes, but they don't beget more children, so their pay-off isn't as high.)

TABLE 4-4: RANDOM CRYPTIC ALLIANCE

d100	Cryptic Alliance	Relics
1–10	Friends of Entropy: Kill everything	Some
11–20	Healers: Peacemakers	Some
21–30	Iron Society: Mutated humans out to eliminate pure-strain humans	Some
31–40	Knights of Genetic Purity: Pure-strain humans über alles	Lots
41–50	Ranks of the Fit: World-conquering army led by mutated animals	Some
51–60	Restorationists: Rebuilding the world	Lots
61–70	Seekers: Hate relics	None
71–75	Archivists: Worship relics	Lots
76–80	Brotherhood of Thought: Enlightened coexistence	Some
81–85	Created: Androids über alles	Lots
86–90	Followers of the Voice: Worship computers	Lots
91–95	Radioactivists: Worship radiation	Some
96–100	Zoopremacists: Mutated animals über alles	Some

Relics: "Some" means as many as common for creatures or explorers of that type. "Lots" means twice as many. "None" means none.

TABLE 4-5: RANDOM SAVAGE STOCK

1–25	Humans (see Explorer NPCs)
26–40	Clickies (see Explorer NPCs)
41–55	Hairies (see Explorer NPCs)
56–70	Scalies (see Explorer NPCs)
71–75	Formians
76–80	Goblins
81–85	Kobolds
86–90	Lizardfolk
91–95	Ogres
96–100	Troglodytes

The D&D creatures listed here are actually mutated humans and animals.

Roll for mutations and defects as for a PC. It's easiest to stop once the savages have even a single noteworthy mutation rather than going all the way to 10. Fewer mutations and defects means easier, faster GMing. If you forget to roll all their defects, that's OK, too.

Savages are found in small hunting groups (1d10 members, possibly with hunting animals), in war parties (1d12+6 members with a higher-level war leader), and in tribes (20-70 combatants, twice that many noncombatants plus 2-4 war leaders plus 1 "king" or "president"). They may consider relics items of status, but they don't usually have many.

EXPLORER NPCS

PCs encounter other explorers from time to time. These statistics also serve for members of cryptic alliances, for savages, and possibly as leader types among humanoid groups.

Table 4-6: Average Explorer Statistics gives average values for explorers of each level. It assumes that the explorer rolled all 12s for abilities, and it "phases in" feats a little at a time. For example, at 1st level almost no explorers have the Improved Initiative feat, and by 10th level they all do. So by 5th level about half the explorers have Improved Initiative, so the "average" explorer has a +2 bonus (half as much as you get from Improved Initiative). By 8th level, three-fourths of explorers have the feat, so the bonus rises to +3.

Apply stock modifiers to these base statistics. For example, hairies get +2 Dex, so increase a hairy explorer's Initiative, ranged attack, Reflex saves, and Dex skills by +1.

To determine the level of the leader of a group, divide 100 by the number of NPCs in the group. Use that number as if it were a roll on d% to see what level the leader is. (That's why the higher levels are at the low end of the d% roll.)

For standard gear, equip an NPC explorer like a PC explorer, usually in half metal armor with a ranged weapon plus either a two-handed weapon or a one-handed weapon and a shield.

DOMES

Domes are the ruined dwellings of the ancients. They are not encounters in themselves, but they make good sites for encounters, and possibly a safe haven for the explorers.

A dome is typically a rounded structure 50 to 200 feet across. Wide domes may have a series of smaller domes atop them (upper stories). The domes are made from a durable, solid substance. They have doors (now kicked in but possibly repaired or replaced), but the domes have no windows. The Ancients were able to turn the walls of their domes clear, so they didn't need separate windows. Often, a dome has a basement, and sometimes they are found clumped together. They were homes, recreational cabins, and scientific installations of the Ancients.

Domes make convenient lairs for beasts, hide-outs for marauders, or homes for savages. Most have been looted of original relics, but many times the valuables of former occupants (now devoured) are to be found there. Tables 4-7, 4-8, and 4-9 let you randomly determine some things that the explorers might find in a dome; roll once on each for each dome. (You can use these tables more generally for ruined cities and other former areas of habitation.)

TABLE 4-6: AVERAGE EXPLORER STATISTICS

d%	Proportion	Lvl	hp	Init	Melee	Ranged	F/R/W	Skills	Feats	Relics
1–1	1	10	78	+5	+9	+9	+8	13	5	2d4
2–3	2	9	71	+4	+8	+8	+7	12	4	1d6
4–5	2	8	63	+4	+7	+7	+6	11	4	1d4
6–8	3	7	56	+3	+6	+6	+6	10	3	1d3
9–12	4	6	48	+3	+6	+6	+5	9	3	1 + 60%
13–19	7	5	41	+3	+5	+5	+5	8	2	1 + 20%
20–29	10	4	34	+2	+4	+4	+4	7	2	80%
30–44	15	3	26	+2	+3	+3	+3	6	1	40%
45–67	23	2	19	+1	+2	+2	+3	5	1	20%
68–100	33	1	11	+1	+1	+1	+2	4	0	10%

Proportion: About how many explorers out of 100 are at this level.

Lvl: Class level (not effective level). For pure-strain humans, add +1 (maximum 10).

hp: Average hit points.

Init: Initiative.

Melee: Melee attack.

Ranged: Ranged attack.

F/R/W: Saving throws. For simplicity, assume that they're all the same. (This is the average of three separate saves.)

Skills: A default NPC explorer has a number of skills equal to 4 + its Int mod (or 5 + Int mod for a pure-strain human). This score is the bonus in each skill, not counting variations for the explorer's stock.

Feats: These are the feats that haven't been folded into hp, initiative, attacks, and saving throws. Pure strains get +1 feat. Use these feats for Superior Mutation or for proficiencies with relics, as needed. If you have extra feats left over and nothing much to do with them, just use them for more Toughness. (Keep it easy for you to run.)

Relics: How many random working relics the explorer has. If a percentage is listed, that's the chance for 1 relic (or 1 additional relic). For savages, roll for relics 1 level lower than normal.

TABLE 4-7: RANDOM DOME INHABITANTS

d%	Dome Inhabitants
1–40	Monsters. Your choice: Table 4-1: Random Mutated Critters Table 4-2: Random D&D Monsters Table 4-3: Random Omega Monsters Robots (1d4 spider bots or 1d2 stalkers)
41–60	1d20 savages. See Table 4-5.
61–70	1d6+2 Cryptic Alliance members. See Table 4-4.
71–80	Explorers. See Table 4-6.
81–90	None
91–100	Roll Twice and Combine. Could be allies or enemies.

WILDERNESS ENCOUNTERS

The likelihood of encountering creatures and the sorts of creatures encountered is up to you, and the GM. But here are some guidelines to get started, or to use as the basis for your own encounter plans.

One easy way to prepare is to roll up a few encounters ahead of time and then, when the dice indicate an encounter, use whichever one you have prepared and that fits the circumstances.

Some rolls for encounters are based on time passing. Others are based on travel. If the PCs travel, they have more encounters than if they stay put because they're more likely to stumble across other creatures.

These are only significant encounters. You can also ad lib encounters with prey creatures, such as giant mutated aphids or mutant sheep.

SPECIAL ENCOUNTERS

Sometimes you'll want an encounter with a little more "oomph" than a random table can provide. The following examples should get you started on the right path.

Pack: As the explorers trek through the wilderness, a pack of mutated dogs trails them. The dogs try to steal food or scavenge other creatures that the explorers kill, but they avoid a direct fight. If the explorers make efforts to befriend the dogs, the pack forms what amounts to an informal alliance with the explorers. The dogs are only as smart as dogs, but that's smart enough for them to "make friends" with humans. While the dogs and the explorers travel together, the dogs serve as a *de facto* alarm system, helping the explorers avoid the worst monsters.

Revel: In the night, the explorers hear singing in the distance. Three savage tribes have gathered for a revel. They are getting drunk on the milk of mutated coconuts, singing, and sport-fighting. If the characters approach, they'll be ushered in as fellow revelers, where they'll be challenged to prove themselves in violent sports. If they attack, scores of drunken savages descend on them in a frenzy.

Frontier: A dozen towns and many smaller settlements have formed a stable, prosperous community. The wilderness for hundreds of miles around is slowly being explored, salvaged, mapped, hunted, settled, and tamed. The explorers, coming from the untamed side of the wilderness, can join the community and settle down (which means the campaign becomes more social and political).

TABLE 4-8: RANDOM DOME RELICS	
d%	Dome Relics
1–30	Abandoned Gear: Could be hybrid weapons, relics, mutated plant and animal goods, trade goods, etc.
31–50	Original Relics: Probably hidden, hard to get to, or protected by some sort of menace. Not a bad place to leave campaign-altering relics, if you're going to have any.
51–60	Traces: Leftover hints of relics, maybe very powerful ones, but they're gone now. Could be grenade craters, foot prints left by powered armor boots, etc.
61–90	None: Someone else got there first.
91–100	Roll Twice

TABLE 4-9: RANDOM DOME MENACE	
d%	Dome Menace
1–20	Poison: Toxic gas, venomous plants, poison dust, etc.
21–30	Radiation: Could be low intensity over the whole dome or high intensity in one location.
31–50	Vermin: Monstrous vermin or maybe lots of little vermin. Spells like *summon swarm* and *insect plague* might work for these menaces.
51–70	Mechanical Hazard: Weak floor, electrical short, collapsing ceiling, elevator that lowers you inexorably into a basement flooded to the ceiling.
71–90	None
91–100	Roll Twice

TABLE 4-10: CHANCE OF WILDERNESS ENCOUNTER	
Each day (dawn to dusk)	10%
Each night (dusk to dawn)	15%
Each day (or night) of travel	30%

TABLE 4-11: RANDOM WILDERNESS ENCOUNTER	
d%	Encounter
1–50	Monsters. Your choice: Table 4-1: Random Mutated Critters Table 4-2: Random D&D Monsters Table 4-3: Random Omega Monsters Robots (1d4 spider bots or 1d2 stalkers)
51–70	1d20 savages. See Table 4-5.
71–80	1d6+2 Cryptic Alliance members. See Table 4-4.
81–90	Explorers. See Table 4-6.
91–100	Roll Twice and Combine. Could be allies or enemies.

Deathbot Rampage: The explorers find a nice place. Just about when they feel safe, deathbots strafe the place into ruin, chasing the explorers away. The explorers trek across the wasteland to find another place, but the deathbots blow that up, too. Repeat until the deathbots blow up the explorers or the explorers find some way to take out the deathbots.

Kook with a Gun: A crazy guy with a torc rifle. He shoots at the players just because he's bonkers. He yells, "I am the King of the World! All will serve me or be destroyed." If the characters can trick him, or if they just get lucky, they can peg him and get the torc rifle. When the characters attack the crazy coot, they probably damage the rifle, dropping it from good to poor status.

Land Shark: The land is criss-crossed with what look like giant mole paths. These are the tracks of a land shark. Each hour, there's a 10% chance that the land shark comes by, looking for food.

Cannibal Savages: The savages retreat into the hills if threatened. Then they call out to the others in their tribe, and soon others answer back. Within hours, there may be a hundred savages prowling the wilderness for the PCs. If they catch the PCs, they torture them, kill them, and eat them, not necessarily in that order.

Bare Patch: The explorers find a large bare patch in the trees, where not much grows. The patch has a rectangular shape. Underneath the bare spot is the flat ceiling of a home that got buried in a landslide long ago. If the characters dig down and break through the ceiling, they find an unlooted house. Giant mutated ferrets are using it as a den, so it's musky, and the ferrets may return at any moment. In the junk is great stuff, not all of it in great shape.

Haunted Laboratory: The explorers find an uninhabited dome that looks as though it's never been taken over and used as a home, either for people or beasts. It has, however, been looted (if not thoroughly). Then a ghostly apparition of a pure strain human attacks the group, draining life away with every touch. The apparition is the psychic echo of the scientist who accidentally destroyed herself while trying to use gear in the lab to transcend physical form. Play the apparition as a spectre.

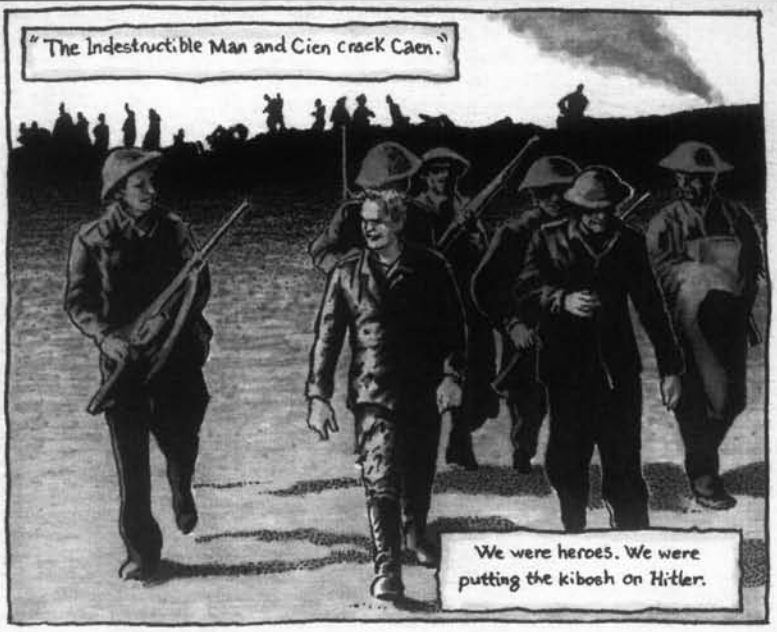
TREASURE

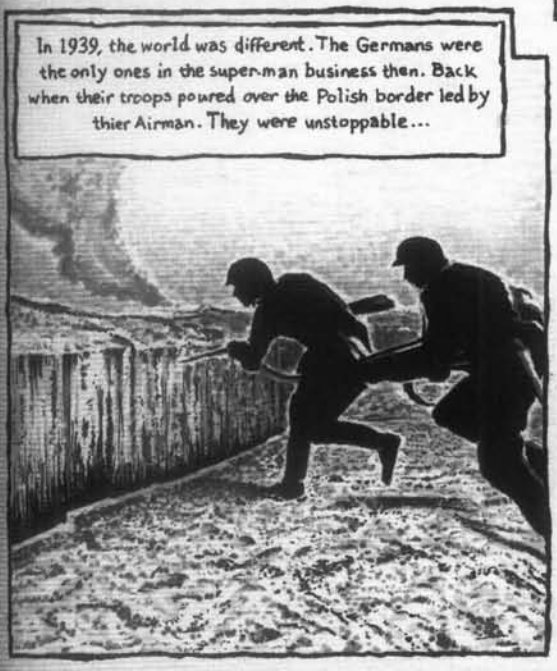
The treasure that counts is relics. You can also deal with treasures that aren't relics but serve as trade goods. Depending on the encounter, standard treasures could include: everyday items of the Ancients (in more or less good condition), animal pelts, canned (or otherwise preserved) food, or useful tools and gear (see Gear, page 30).

GODLIKE

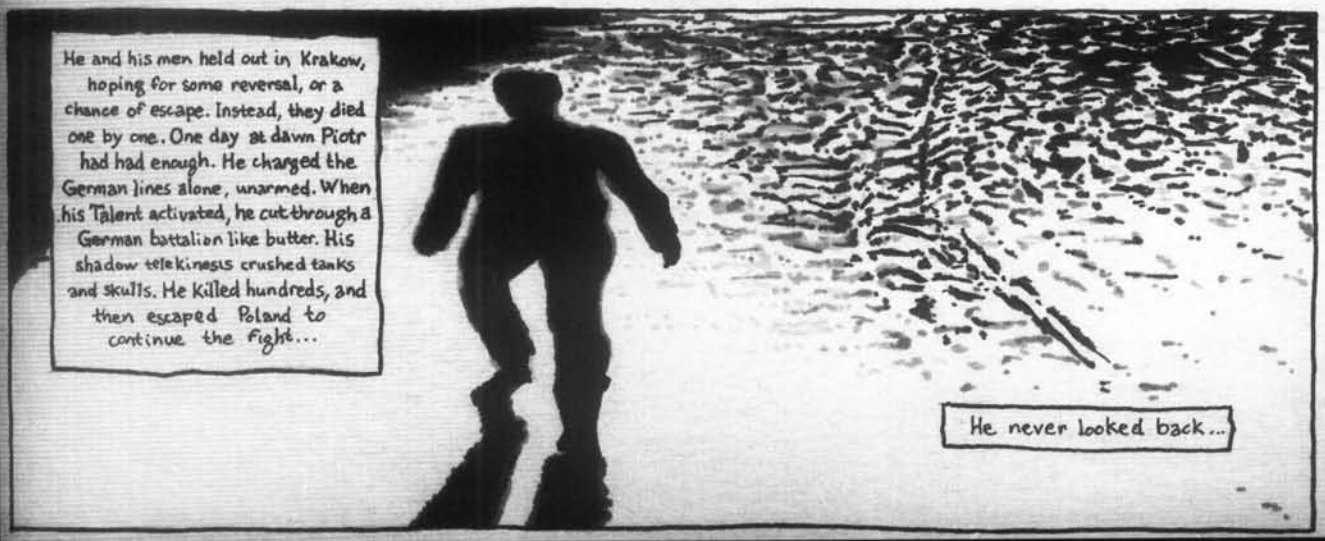
There Were Giants in Those Days... Part Three: Cien, the Shadow by Dennis Detwiller

Is that a photo of you and Cien there Mr. Moreland?
Yup. From 1944. Right after D-Day.

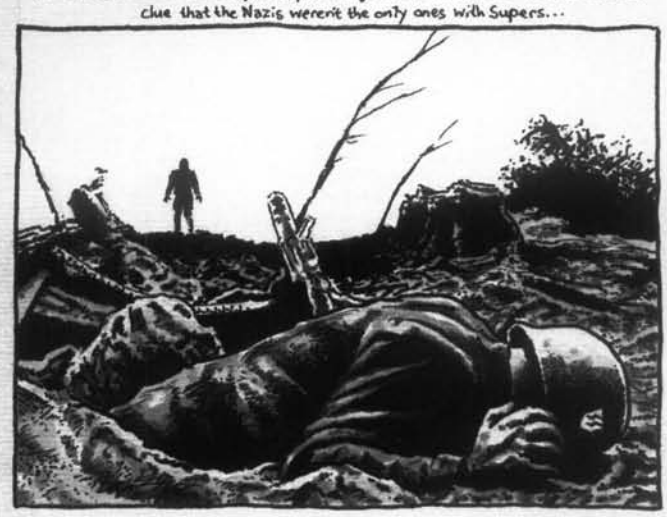

"The Indestructible Man and Cien crack Caen."
We were heroes. We were putting the kibosh on Hitler.


In 1939, the world was different. The Germans were the only ones in the super-man business then. Back when their troops poured over the Polish border led by thier Airman. They were unstoppable...

Cien was just Piotr Ciowiski then, just a Colonel in a hell of a mess. Surrounded on all sides by an enemy who had won the battle the moment they crossed the border. But Piotr didn't give up. Piotr never gave up at anything...


He and his men held out in Krakow, hoping for some reversal, or a chance of escape. Instead, they died one by one. One day at dawn Piotr had had enough. He charged the German lines alone, unarmed. When his Talent activated, he cut through a German battalion like butter. His shadow telekinesis crushed tanks and skulls. He killed hundreds, and then escaped Poland to continue the fight...
He never looked back...

Cien fled to Britain, and from there, took the fight against the Nazis worldwide. He trained at the British Special Operations Executive, and joined the Talent Special Service Squads. He fought in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, France—all over using his shadow-hands to smash tanks and men. The Nazis, of course, couldn't admit that a Pole was responsible for such attacks—much less a Polish Talent. But to the rest of the world he was a ray of hope. Along with Pevnose, Cien was the first real clue that the Nazis weren't the only ones with Supers...



He went along with the first British group of Talents to North Africa. Golgotha, Puppeteer, the Human Bullet, John Torn—the British Talents embraced him as a brother, and fought the growing tide of German super-men together. For two long years they toiled and died in the deserts, smashing the Afrika Korps and pushing Rommel back to Tunisia and then out of Africa altogether...

I met him in 1943, when the Allied command was toying with the idea of mixing British and American Talent teams for assaults on Fortress Europa. Me, I was America's hero, the Indestructible Man, and he was Cien, the savior of the Polish people—together (and with a little help from our Czech friend Pevnost) we wrought havoc with the High Command of the Third Reich. We worked well together—we all did, the Talents. We had so much in common. Only we understood that our powers were only another tool, like a bazooka, tank or machine gun. That, given the right circumstances, our powers would mean less than nothing.
Together we planned the Talent assaults that would get us a foothold in Europe—Sicily, Anzio, D-Day...
I don't remember how many times he saved my life...I couldn't even begin to guess...

We kicked around after D-Day, working on breaking isolated pockets of resistance. We smashed 12th SS Panzer at Caen, we kicked General Dollman's defenses in like they were made of wet blankets.
Then news began to trickle down about a new operation. Market Garden—planned by General Montgomery. I knew it was bad news from the start, the plan was full of holes big enough to drive a truck through...
Cien was onboard though—his countrymen, the First Polish Independant Parachute Brigade was one of the main forces in the operation. I said to him, I said "Piotr, you go there to Holland and you'll never come back..."

He never did come back.
The German Super-men were waiting for him—somehow they knew he was coming.
Piotr took three with him before they finally closed in for the kill. He died doing what he had always done—fighting despite the odds...
I got busted down for calling Montgomery a sonofabitch, we buried a box full of bricks instead of Piotr, and the war limped on... A lot of us went that way.

Some of us got called up before our time. Cien and I knew the odds, and we fought anyway. Others were so innocent, they had no choice in the matter. Some of us were stupid enough to believe in good and evil back then...

Next Issue:
Aesgir, the Spear of the Gods